

# WORLD CHRISTIANITY

Yesterday      Today      Tomorrow

HENRY P. VAN DUSEN



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# WORLD CHRISTIANITY

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO THE MEMORY OF  
WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN  
WILLIAM PATON  
WILLIAM TEMPLE

Colleagues in Every Phase of World Christianity



## PREFACE

THIS book gathers into summary various studies carried on over a number of years. It is based on material originally prepared for delivery as the Jarrell Lectures at Emory University in 1945 and the Fondren Lectures at Southern Methodist University in 1946. In preparation for publication this material has been completely recast and greatly expanded.

To the deans and faculties of these two institutions I am indebted for the invitations to the lectureships, for gracious hospitality during their delivery, and especially for permission to join the two sets of lectures in a single volume. I am also indebted to Charles Scribner's Sons for their permission to reproduce sentences and paragraphs from my earlier writings in this field.

After these pages were ready for the press there appeared *Toward a United Church*, the posthumous work of my teacher and colleague William Adams Brown. Dr. Brown's book was published too late for me to take advantage of it, except in an occasional footnote. But I had seen the book in early draft and felt it unnecessary to retrace territory which it would cover. I hope my book may be regarded as in the nature of a complement to Dr. Brown's. *Toward a United Church* contains over fifty pages of appendixes—valuable material embodying many of the more important documents in the history of church union as well as an excellent selected bibliography. That useful source material has not been repeated here.

To a number of friends who have graciously read parts of the manuscript—Robbins W. Barstow, Henry Smith

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Leiper, and John T. McNeill—I am grateful. Most of all I am grateful to Miss Myrtle A. Cline, librarian of the William Adams Brown Ecumenical Library at Union Theological Seminary, who has checked and rechecked every fact, date, and reference; has prepared Appendix 1, "A Chronology of Christian Co-operation and Union"; and has undertaken to read the proofs and prepare the index. Such accuracy as the book may claim is due in no small measure to her generous gift of time and interest.

HENRY P. VAN DUSEN

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The Ecumenical Movement, deeply as it is rooted in the past and much as it carries over from the ages that precede, brings something which is in a very real sense new. It is new in its goal, a unity which is consistent with difference. It is new in its method, the building of an organization which combines action in the field of agreement with study in the field of difference. It is new in its unifying principle, the faith that it is possible for institutions as well as for individuals to exemplify in their conduct the spirit of Jesus Christ.

—WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN  
*Toward a United Church*, p. ix

The ecumenical movement is not primarily a matter of organization. It is primarily a matter of personal confidence and trust which is the human response to an act of God, assuring His children of a unity which they have not created but which they can accept and enjoy.

—WILLIAM PATON  
*Religion in Life*, Autumn 1942

As though in preparation for such a time as this, God has been building up a Christian fellowship which now extends into almost every nation, and binds citizens of them all together in true unity and mutual love. No human agency has planned this. It is the result of the great missionary enterprise of the last hundred and fifty years. . . . Almost incidentally the great world-fellowship has arisen; it is the great new fact of our era. . . .

Here is one great ground of hope for the coming days—this worldwide Christian fellowship, this ecumenical movement. . . .

It is of urgent importance that we become aware of it, that we further it in every way open to us, and that through it we take our part in providing for the Spirit of Christ the agency by which He may transform the world.

—WILLIAM TEMPLE  
*The Church Looks Forward*, pp. 2-4

## Part

### I

## INTRODUCTION

IF ONE were searching for a single word to gather up the meaning of the days through which we are living, he might well have recourse to a medical term: "gestation." Not childbirth, to be sure; but *worldbirth*.

As in childbirth, the mood of humanity in this hour is a strange amalgam of two contradictory emotions—agony and exultation, fear and expectation. All through these latter years—not merely six years of world conflict, but thirty years of war, respite, regirding and war renewed—another single word has chorused through the vocabulary of mankind until we weary of its reiteration. It is the word "crisis." It has been repeated so tiresomely because it so accurately reflects the deepest nature of our times. More recently, the Chinese transliteration of that word in its double meaning has become almost equally hackneyed through repetition. And for the same reason—because it so faithfully mirrors the character of today. For in Chinese the word "crisis" is repre-



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sented by an ideograph which carries a double connotation—*peril* and *opportunity*. We live in an hour pregnant with not one but two possibilities: *peril* or *opportunity*.

That is simply to say that this is, in the profoundest sense, an epoch of crisis. In his massive historical review, *Man and Society in Calamity*, Professor Pitirim A. Sorokin piles up evidence that in any time of transition or catastrophe men and communities either rise to greater heights of character and valor than in ordinary days or sink to unprecedented depths of brutality and cowardice. There is a sharp sifting of sheep and goats. No person, no group escapes that winnowing process. It occurs in hours of overwhelming natural catastrophe—famine, flood, epidemic. It occurs at times of radical social upheaval—revolution or war.

One observes trivial illustrations of it, amusing yet pathetic. On the occasion some years ago of a great city fire in which many lives stood in peril, most of the residents in an endangered building rose above all thought of personal safety and possessions to throw themselves into the work of rescue. But at the height of the danger a furloughed missionary was observed hurrying from the building—to which he had returned to rescue a plate bearing a cookie and a half-eaten banana! His child's supper must not be interrupted. Lifelong habits of devotion and sacrifice which had sent this man to a foreign land in service of an alien people had, in this moment of supreme emergency, suddenly reversed under unfamiliar testing.

One marks sobering illustrations of this winnowing process when the life of a whole people, under stress of national peril, is both transfigured by corporate gallantry of which their noblest annals have hardly offered foretaste and stained by unaccustomed shame. Thus in Great Britain, in the darkest days of 1940, all sorts and conditions of folk demon-

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strated quiet fortitude and a submergence of every private interest in the common destiny, a demonstration before which the entire world stood in reverence; but there were undercurrents of petty thievery and brutish avarice previously unknown among the world's most law-abiding people. So in China, eight years of sustained privation, despoilment, and suffering which claimed the lives of millions and drove tens of millions into homeless exile gave the modern world its noblest demonstration of mass heroism, and its sorriest examples of individual graft and greed, at tragic cost to the nation's honor and strength.

Under stress of crisis, both the corporate restraints which check the grosser vices and the social conventions which inhibit the nobler virtues are relaxed. Impulses deep within human nature, which are ordinarily latent—impulses of the brute and of the saint, "original sin" and "original virtue"—are loosed. Both the lower and the higher desires of men have full scope. We see clearly what it lies in man to be.

This law of history runs not only in times of war and war's aftermath. But, as we should expect, in an hour of universal crisis which engulfs all mankind and throws the whole store of human achievement into the scales, it works with peculiar power. It holds us all within its grip—persons and institutions—and molds us, for better, for worse. In normal days we may drift upon the surface of a seductive if specious moral neutrality. In these days, in life no less than in world politics, there is no neutrality.

For the first time in the long millenia, a global age has wrapped all mankind within a single garment of destiny and has willed for them a common fate. The ultimate outcome of the catastrophic changes which shake our society no one can foresee. The precise forms which the common life will take in the new age a-borning no one dares forecast. This

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one thing we know—there will be no reversion to “normalcy,” no return to old days and old ways. Either mankind will go forward to an order finer, truer, more worthy of human possibilities than any previously achieved, or we shall certainly go down—all of us together—to a lower level of human existence than the modern age has known. Peril or opportunity—these are the alternatives for humanity and for every great human institution.<sup>1</sup>

The same alternatives which shadow mankind confront the Christian Church. In such a setting, let us examine the situation of the Church today and the prospect for Christianity in the world of tomorrow.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. John Foster Dulles in an address before the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, Sept. 8, 1946: “We would only delude ourselves if we did not look on the future as one of peril. That, however, is no reason for pessimism. The future has always been a future of peril. Often the perils have been hidden so that there has been no defense against them. Also, those perils brought with them no opportunity comparable to the risk. This time the perils are seen; possible defenses are at hand, and the vigorous and dynamic spirit which produces the peril can also produce an era of unprecedented progress. Thus we have great opportunity at the price of measurable risk. More than this men should not ask for.”

## Chapter 1

### THE REDISCOVERY OF THE CHURCH

ON MANY sides today one hears it said, "The world is rediscovering the Church."

That is certainly an overstatement. But it is an exaggeration of the truth. The fact is that, clear across the earth, in the most widely separated places and under the most sharply contrasted circumstances, men and women of all types and cultures have unexpectedly become aware of the existence and the significance of the Christian Church. It is probably not an overstatement to say that, in the estimate of great numbers of critically minded "outsiders" who previously confessed no debtorship to religion and acknowledged no responsibility for its institutions, the Church stands in higher regard today than ever before in our lifetime. The editors of one of our greatest publishing concerns, who are noted for their acute sensitivity to trends of thought, have recently summarized their impression of the contemporary mind:

There is no doubt that the irritation of our times centers in the area of religion. Disguised as political, "ideological," economic feuds, all the battles of our epoch come finally down to a desire for religious reorientation. The Church is no longer on

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the defensive (now it is science that offers the appeasing "compromises"), and theology is about to become once more an immediately practical public concern. . . . There is a seemingly general trend towards institutional religion.

This "rediscovery of the Church" is a by-product of the second World War. It is important to recognize that there has been no direct causal connection. Obviously, the churches did not cause the war; they had little direct effect upon its outcome. In the main, the war has wrought little noteworthy change in the life or strength of the Christian churches. What has transpired has been well described by Charles T. Leber: "Here and there across the face of the earth, the fires of war have burst forth in devastating conflagration, lighting up areas and peoples and problems heretofore hidden in shadowy obscurity. In the ghastly illumination cast by war's flames, *the Christian Church has unexpectedly been discovered.*"

From the record of the Christian churches in wartime three facts stand forth: The Christian Church has been discovered as the one indomitable, invincible champion of human rights. The Christian Church has been discovered as the one omnipresent, dauntless ministrant to human need. The Christian Church has been discovered as the one invulnerable, indestructible world community.

### i

*The Christian Church has been discovered as the one indomitable, invincible champion of human rights.*

This is mainly, though not solely, the achievement of churches of the continent of Europe.

On the European Continent the war fell upon churches seemingly ill-prepared for its testing. Of the German Church, Hitler had boasted in 1933: "I promise you that,

if I wished to, I could destroy the Church in a few years. It is hollow and false and rotten through and through. One push and the whole structure would collapse. Its day has gone." That was the judgment not only of the enemies of these churches but of their most sympathetic friends. In the eyes of many of their own leaders as well as of Christians of other lands, the Continental churches appeared reactionary, comatose, perhaps dying.

Many of them were "state churches," with the civil ruler as their head and the ownership of ecclesiastical property, appointment to church offices, and payment of ministers' salaries in the hands of government. They had inherited the ancient and vicious principle *cuius regio, eius religio*—"whoever rules determines the religion of the people."

In southeastern Europe the official churches were of the Eastern Orthodox confession, intimately linked to the state. Priests with flowing black robes, long beards, and ascetic countenances, and ancient liturgy unaltered for centuries, suggested aloofness from the contemporary world.

Between the three great types of Christian communion—Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant—there was virtually no co-operation but more usually hostility to the point of persecution by the dominant body. Protestants were divided into many competing sects and parties, often hardly on speaking terms with one another.

These Continental churches were for the most part traditional in theological outlook and negative in their view of the Church's proper role in society. Many of their leaders insisted that religion's sole responsibility is for the spiritual destiny of individuals. The suggestion that churches might appropriately concern themselves with political and social questions was dismissed with one disdainful word: "Americanism."

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Most serious of all, the inner life of the Continental churches seemed pitifully lacking in vitality, and their touch with the masses of the people and the great issues of the day increasingly remote. The frank indictment of a young Hollander of world-wide distinction might have been leveled also against churches in most other Continental lands:

The Dutch Reformed Church had become a Church without spiritual leadership and without a voice. . . . It was pastor-centered, largely receptive, often theologically divided and very bourgeois. Traditions of individualism and self-satisfaction had reigned for hundreds of years. As a result, its influence in the country was decreasing.

Yet in country after country—Germany, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, Yugoslavia, Greece—as one after another of the institutions to which men had confidently looked as defenders of liberty, justice, and humanity—the universities, the press, organized labor, business and the professions—crumbled or capitulated, the Church held firm. In each of these lands it stood forth, the only unintimidated voice of truth, the only unshattered champion of the oppressed and persecuted, to which men of every race and creed might turn for guidance in their desperation and for succor and support in their sufferings.

The specific issues where human values were most gravely imperiled and where, therefore, the churches took their firmest stand varied from country to country. In Norway the major issue was freedom for school and church to teach and preach truth. But in Holland it was the defense of a people almost wholly outside the bounds of the Church, the Jews. In France it was the menace of moral and spiritual contagion from a corrupt and servile political leadership. In Czechoslovakia it was the slaughter of innocent patriots; in Serbia, suppression of the Church and murder of its

leaders; in Greece, the execution of guiltless hostages. Within Germany itself the offenses against which Christian leadership not only uttered its protest but in many instances took effective action would require a catalogue for their enumeration—the practice of euthanasia (slaughter of the aged, the insane, and the infirm), persecution of Jews, perversion of youth, terrorism by secret police, abrogation of justice, massed deportations, forced labor, and many more which could not be disclosed until the day of deliverance from the Nazi curse which these German churchmen despised and against which many worked secretly at daily peril of their lives.<sup>1</sup>

The issues varied. But the underlying spirit of unyielding resistance, shrewd resourcefulness, and indomitable resolution was the same. The most convincing testimony to the churches' effectiveness came from their enemies. The Quisling press of Norway paid its reluctant tribute: "The Christian Front is the most difficult to conquer." And to this evidence may be added the considered judgment of one without connection with the Church and previously its severe critic, whose capacity for scientific appraisal all the world reveres. These words of Albert Einstein are now familiar:

When National Socialism came to Germany, being a lover of freedom, I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth. But no, the universities were immediately silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers whose flaming editorials in days gone by had proclaimed their love of freedom. But they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks.

<sup>1</sup> See Van Dusen, *What Is the Church Doing?* pp. 7-54; Henry Smith Leiper, *Churchmen Who Defy Hitler*; Hugh Martin and others, *Christian Counter-Attack*; W. A. Visser 't Hooft, ed., *The Struggle of the Dutch Church*; Stewart Herman, *The Rebirth of the German Church*.



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Then I looked to the individual writers who as literary guides of Germany had written much and often concerning the place of freedom in modern life. But they too were mute. Only the Churches stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing truth. I never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced thus to confess that what I once despised, I now praise unreservedly.

The Dutchman whose gloomy estimate of the spiritual vitality of the prewar churches has already been quoted thus reported the new situation:

There is once more a Church in Holland. . . . What most of us in our unbelief had considered impossible has happened. God has sent His breath on the dry bones and we have once more a Mother Church which gives us guidance and consolation, and which holds up our hands in the struggle which is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness of this world.

The Church continues to speak. . . . Indeed, its voice grows clearer and stronger. . . . Many who had come to think of the Church as an antiquated institution suddenly find it a central factor in the great national struggle and begin to wonder why the Church stands when so many other bodies fall.

There is a question uppermost with all thoughtful students of Europe's travail: Why does the Church stand when so many other bodies fall?

The Church has proved the one indomitable, invincible champion of human rights.

## ii

*The Christian Church has been discovered as the one omnipresent, dauntless ministrant to human need.*

This is the record of the Church wherever war created special claims on its ministry and imposed special tests upon

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its valor. Inevitably, particularly in circumstances of direct and fiercest conflict. Most strikingly in areas which have been lifted into public consciousness for the first time. This is mainly, though not solely, the achievement of the youngest Christian churches—churches brought into being only within the past century by the outreach of the Christian world mission. It is principally a discovery by men and women of the armed forces, especially those of the United States.

That story is beginning to be fairly widely known. It can be appreciated at its full weight only through attention to hundreds, thousands of individual incidents occurring in every part of the world. It is the sum total of these incidents which is impressive, overwhelming.

They follow certain definite patterns, these incidents. Indeed, so similar are their circumstances that one might suspect the same happenings described in slightly different language did not the tales which appear so nearly identical in content carry widely separated date lines and come from different continents and from places thousands of miles apart.

American airmen are shot down far out at sea. Eventually they paddle their rubber dinghy toward the beach of an isolated coral island—near Australia, or among the Solomons, or in Micronesia—which they know to lie behind enemy lines. They anticipate with foreboding the possibility of falling into the hands of the inhabitants, of whose cannibal practices they have heard hair-raising tales, and who have been subjected to a skilled antiwhite propaganda. Sure enough, as they near land they descry dim figures of massive men of ebony skin, scantily clad, their heads covered by extraordinary toppieces of kinky black hair—a horrific sight to the most toughened fighter. But, as their boat touches shore,

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they are greeted in broken English in an unmistakably sincere welcome, are spirited into hiding, are rested, fed, and nursed back to health, and finally are delivered safely by night in swift racing canoes to the nearest friendly base. Not, however, before the visitors have had opportunity to discern the simple, strong, and clean characters of their hosts and to discover that everything in their life roots and centers in their daily worship and its sustaining faith.

Or a flyer bails out over a seemingly uninhabited jungle—in Africa or Burma or New Guinea. A slow end by starvation looms as an almost inevitable fate. But natives appear as though from nowhere, or a tiny village hidden amid the fastness is chanced upon. The only welcome which can be anticipated is death at the hands of uncivilized savages. But the natives, with all their crude ways and primitive existence, at once reveal striking marks of elementary education and culture. Their village is clean, orderly, and peaceable. Alongside its thatched bamboo church stands a school and a meagerly equipped dispensary. Here, likewise, the cause of the extraordinary beauty and strength of native life cannot be missed; the nightly prayers, the speech and inward reality of Christian devotion spell the answer.

Or troops are sent to a remote post—in West Africa, on the Upper Nile, in Arabia or Iran or interior China—on some unheralded and thankless mission of construction. They find themselves amidst communities marked off from all their neighbors by health, literacy, and good government, and amongst villagers whose unassuming excellence of life and faith surpasses any the visitors have observed in an American community. At the heart stands the secret—a Christian church, as simple, unostentatious, and genuine as the influences which flow from it.

Or, as the tide of battle recedes, the men of battle find

leisure to penetrate the near-by hinterland—in Central China, or India, or on a Pacific Island—and to observe under normal circumstances native life first tested under stress of conflict. Once more, what strikes them most is personal character and communal well-being beyond any they have previously met, and all rooted in faith of a sincerity and power eclipsing any they have heretofore known.

Almost every one of us has his own story to add to the over-all picture, testified to him by soldiers or sailors or air-men of his acquaintance—fragments which, pieced together, make up the mosaic of the total record of the Christian churches on the battle fronts in faraway places. There is no time now to examine those fragments one by one and put them together into a composite whole.<sup>2</sup> Two or three only can be given, some now familiar. They are typical of thousands, and must be so regarded. It is the contrast between what might have been expected of the Church and what it was actually discovered to be which heightens the significance.

It is only eighty years since Christians first attempted to bring their faith to New Guinea and its neighboring islands. One of those earliest missionaries thus described the culture of the inhabitants:

Cannibalism prevails, more especially to take revenge. . . . War is waged with little intermission. Prisoners are tortured, and one tribe of warriors is a source of great terror by the practice of drinking human blood. . . . Worship of a deity is unknown, and there are no idols. . . . Sorcery, which is universally practiced, is the great controller of events.

Of the initial contact with New Ireland, the pioneer reported:

<sup>2</sup> See Van Dusen, *They Found the Church There*, *passim*.

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The chief was called Sangin—"the smell of it"—because his village was seldom free from the smell of roasting bodies. From the rafters of the house hung thirty-five human jaw-bones and unmentionable parts of human bodies. On the trunk of the palm just outside, seventy-six notches recorded past orgies. Skulls grinned from the stately yellow Luluho tree.

But when the aircraft carrier *Lexington* sank in the Battle of the Coral Sea, two American fliers crash-landed close to Rossel Island. Natives rescued them, fed and protected them until they could be sent off to safety. From earliest times these islanders had been noted for their skill in succoring victims of shipwreck. But for a somewhat different purpose. When a passenger ship had foundered there eighty years before, three hundred Chinese had been similarly rescued by the grandparents of these Papuans. They also had been well cared for, and whenever a feast was held some of the Chinese were invariably invited. But they never returned. "They came not as guests of honor but as the *pièce de résistance* of the local feast." Ultimately only one Chinese remained alive.

The Associated Press correspondent Vern Haugland bailed out over the jungles of New Guinea. He wandered for weeks, and finally chanced upon a village. The first question which brought response was, "Where missionary station? White-man mission. Need help." The natives carried him to an outpost of the Church of England in charge of two missionaries. He wrote:

I went to sleep, feeling grateful for the circumstances which had led me not merely to white men but to religious men. . . . Many churchgoers had seemed to me complete hypocrites. . . . But, watching these two poorly fed men who had risked their lives to remain with the natives in the jungle—watching them at worship in this bare room, noting the quiet joy on their faces,

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listening to the musical words of the Scriptures—I realized that I must have been wrong.<sup>3</sup>

It is not quite a century since a small company of American Congregationalists landed among the multitudinous islands of Micronesia. Of their earliest efforts, Professor Samuel Eliot Morison of Harvard says:

It took courage to plant missions on these islands at that era. The people were bellicose and liable to murder the crew of any vessel which offered plunder. . . . These early missionaries, armed only with the Bible and a faith in human nature, entered islands notorious for cutting out trading schooners and murdering all hands. They lived for years on native food and such salt horse and flour as they could import at long intervals. They built boats and sailed in them or in native canoes to other islands, never knowing when they might be murdered.

Another historian adds: "The Micronesians were all liars and thieves. . . . Their gods were not loved or esteemed, only dreaded; all they asked of them was to be let alone." One of the pioneers, Hiram Bingham, son of one of the first missionaries to Hawaii and father of the former Senator from Connecticut, was compelled to report, six years after the beginning of his efforts in the Gilbert Islands: "Our two converts have gone back to heathenism. Others for whom we entertained great hope have grown cold, and there is not a native of Apaiang or Tarawa upon whom we can look as a friend of Jesus."

But eighty years later American marines, storming up the jagged coral beaches of those same islands, were met by an old woman emerging from the cave where she had hidden, holding out her Bible and saying, "This is our book. We are Christians from Boston!"

A chaplain reports transporting a group of native young

<sup>3</sup> Vern Haugland, *Letter from New Guinea*, pp. 62, 86 ff.

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people in a landing barge from an island which had been devastated and was still in danger to a place of safety. At the end of a wearying day he drew apart and, leaning against the rail, unconsciously began to hum "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." Presently the young folk took up the same tune in their own words. The rest of the trip was a songfest; the only embarrassment was that his guests knew so many more hymns than the chaplain. He adds:

They are wonderful people—intelligent, dignified, and moral. It was a constant surprise to us how clean and neat they had kept themselves. The men had very few clothes left, but they had poise. . . . The missionaries must have been wonderful people, too. They certainly gave these natives something to hold on to through their troubles.

He reports overhearing one soldier say to another: "Gee, I've certainly got a new angle on foreign missions. After having seen these people, I believe in missions."

Another press correspondent of outstanding reputation, John Dos Passos, writing in *Life*, describes his first landing in the Marshalls. Falling into conversation with a native of quiet but impressive dignity, he inquired if the Islander remembered the Boston missionaries.

"Missionaries teach us everything," he replied smiling.

"They sure are Christians," was the comment of a sergeant standing near by.

Later Dos Passos reports the words of the Navy captain who was atoll commander: "The more I see of [these people] the more I think the early missionaries did a good job. . . . They were the first white men who tried to help these people. They made pretty good Christians of them."

It was in the Solomons, however, and especially on Guadalcanal, that the attitude of Melanesian and Polynesian

natives was first tested. It was there that their bravery, skill, and devotion first claimed the amazement and gratitude of American forces.

How many of those who have had occasion to admire these present-day Solomon Islanders know that less than a century ago their ancestors were notorious as "the most treacherous and the fiercest headhunters in the Pacific"? "Fighting and butchery are the main business of their life. . . . In their war-canoes, they travel long distances on their head-hunting expeditions, and return with ghastly trophies hanging from the mast-head, or from the waists of the conquerors." How many know that of all the Solomons, Guadalcanal was the wildest, most dangerous, most impenetrable? It was in 1856 that Christian white men first attempted a landing there. They were unable so much as to put the prows of their boats on the beach. "Guadalcanal was more lawless than most of the other islands; the chiefs seemed to have little or no authority, and were continuously fighting." It was thirty years before another attempt was hazarded, with almost the same result. Then, four years later, an approach was made, again without success. It was just over fifty years ago, in 1894, that two intrepid Anglican missionaries succeeded in establishing a toe hold in the face of almost insurmountable opposition. What might have been the fate of the hazardous American invasion of 1942 if, for half a century, those few Britishers and New Zealanders had not struggled on, almost against hope?

And the Solomon Islanders today? An American sergeant in a headquarters company, who had just received his degree as a botanist before induction into the army, tells his family at home of his first leave while on duty at Guadalcanal:

Last week I received something you ordinarily do not think men overseas would get—a three-day pass. I used the three days



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for an expedition to the jungle along with another fellow. . . . The second day we lost the trail, and only after climbing up and down a mountain four times did we locate it, and then we followed it the wrong way. At about this time being tired, wet, and hungry, we sat down for a short break. Soon came along two husky natives. With our new guides we traveled back along the trail to their village resting on top of a ridge. We were awaited at the village by a man whom I, at first, took to be the king. He invited us to his hut—a bamboo thatched affair—where he made us comfortable and let us rest while he talked about our trip and the village. Although I didn't expect to see skulls hanging on the walls, the alarm clock, books, pictures, mirrors, and maps he had surprised me as much. These conveniences should have told me who he was. He was a native missionary, and there doesn't exist a finer Christian than Gideon. If ever I had lost my faith, Gideon would have restored it better than any man I know. He is one of the finest men I have ever met. . . . And now that I have been back in the hills once, I shall feel chained down until I can go back and see Gideon.

Later, when the order came to leave Guadalcanal, this sergeant wrote: "Every soldier here would be sure I was crazy if they heard me say I am sorry to leave. But I am. I shall never see Gideon again."

Another American soldier, after describing the moving Thanksgiving Day service arranged by the natives on one of the outer islands in honor of their guests, summarizes the widespread impression: "When you look at the simple life and love of God these natives display, it makes you wonder just which race is ignorant or savage." And an officer, a scientist and not a church member, adds:

People would feel a lot better about the money that goes to these missionaries if they could see what they have done. . . . The people they work with were headhunters not long ago. Now they are an industrious, honest group on the whole, who may have to come over and evangelize our civilized Western world after a bit.

The transformation has received its most appropriate symbolization not in speech but in act—in the Memorial Chapel at the heart of the military cemetery on Guadalcanal, where sixteen hundred Americans lie buried. The chapel, erected entirely by four thousand native laborers working without pay over a two-month period, was dedicated to God and presented to the American people by the Christian Solomon Islanders as their tribute to the men who brought them liberation. It has been described by some who have visited it as one of the most beautiful houses of worship they have ever seen.

The whole story is summed up in the incident, perhaps more widely publicized than others but in no sense unique, of the seven American airmen who, after two and a half days at sea, were washed up on a remote Solomon atoll. They were rescued and hidden from the Japanese, were nursed back to strength, and after eighty-seven days were sent off by night to safety—all seven converted to Jesus Christ. One of them gave the explanation: "Every night they would gather around us and we took turns reading the Bible. That and our experiences made us Christians. You can tell the world that I am now a devout Christian." What a commentary on our Christianity at home that hard-bitten men of the armed forces, bent only on the detection and destruction of their enemies, must journey halfway round the world, to one of the most isolated spots among the islands of the seven seas and to a people whose parents were practicing cannibals, to find an illustration of Christian life which is really convincing, indeed irresistible!

However, we would get this whole matter in false perspective if we pictured it solely in terms of spectacular incidents among primitive peoples under the immediate stress of combat. As I have said, the stories come to us from every corner

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of the so-called "non-Christian" world, from centers of the most ancient and advanced Oriental culture no less than from the frontiers of civilization, and in circumstances of normal peaceful existence as well as under the excitement of peril. I have said nothing, for example, of the testimony to the Church's influence through the outstanding leadership of Christians in the national affairs of China, or India, and hardly less of Japan—a whole chapter in itself. The fact is that almost everywhere on the earth's surface where soldiers and sailors and airmen have gone to clear a jungle, to lay an airstrip, to construct a pipe line, to transport supplies, to hold a base, to take their places alongside hard-pressed allies, they have found the Christian Church already there.

The Church has been discovered as the one omnipresent, dauntless ministrant to human need.

### iii

*The Christian Church has been discovered as the one invulnerable, indestructible world community.*

This assertion carries us beyond the observation of the "outsider." For the most part, the world is not aware of this fact, although it furnished the theme for a remarkable editorial in *Life* magazine not long ago. And the editors of the publishing concern whose diagnosis of the contemporary mind we noted earlier conclude their exposition of the trend toward religion, theology, and the Church with this observation: "There is a mounting interest in interdenominational understanding, if not Unification."

This statement carries us, also, beyond the immediate purview of this chapter. We shall return to it later when we come to examine "World Christianity Today" as seen from within the Christian movement. It must be recorded here, however, merely as an affirmation of fact. For it is

climactic to all else. In a Christian perspective this may be the most important aspect of the notable record of Christian churches in wartime.

This is mainly, though not solely, the achievement of world Christianity in its entirety, of the *world Church*, more particularly of the recent movements for larger Christian co-operation and union. Behind the record of war years lies a century of quiet, largely unheralded, agonizing struggle to knit the severed limbs of the Body of Christ, a struggle which we shall consider further at a later point. At the moment we must be satisfied with an inclusive generalization: The world movement for Christian unity in its every aspect—organic union of previously separated churches; creation of interdenominational federations; united ministry to prisoners of war, to refugees, to youth; united succor and support for destitute or persecuted branches of the Christian Church; launching of a World Council of Churches; and, perhaps most significant of all, as it was most difficult to achieve, furthering of common understanding and fellowship across the chasms of war and promotion of common planning on the issues and problems of postwar order—all these aspects of a single world Christian impulse have pressed steadily forward, painfully and slowly but determinedly and surely, from week to week and year to year. The record may be summarized in a single sentence: In Christian co-operation and unity, the five years of the second World War have been the most notable quinquennium in Christian history.

The decisive proof has been forthcoming in the immediate aftermath of the war, when contact has first been possible between churches sundered as enemies by four to eight years of conflict. Within four months after V-E and V-J days embassies representative of Christians of victor nations

had ventured to journey to the heart of recent "enemy" lands. There they met welcome, understanding, joyous reunion at the hands of fellow Christians.<sup>4</sup>

Today, world Christianity is the only living, healthful world reality, the only existing world community—to those with eyes to see, a rebuke to the nations for the unreality of their divisions and conflicts; to a yearning humanity, a promise, a foretaste of the community of peoples which might be, and some day *must* be.

It is true: The Christian Church has proved the one invulnerable, indestructible world community.

From this record of Christian churches in wartime five conclusions emerge:

1. It is a record of *churches* rather than of individual Christians, and of individuals only as they have spoken and acted as churchmen. In these latter days, merely individual religion has proved impotent. Only a great corporate reality can struggle effectively against demonic corporate might. Only a great corporate reality can stand securely amidst the disintegration of war and revolution. Only a great corporate reality can count significantly in an age of global conflict and mass movements.

2. It is a record of all Christian churches alike, conservative and liberal—Adventist, Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian. More important, it is a record of *Christian churches united*. In some instances it is a record of a united stand by members of different faiths—in Europe, of Jews and Christians; in Asia, of Buddhists and Christians. In many instances it is a record of all Christian bodies united—in Holland and France and Germany,

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *The Return to Japan* (Friendship Press), and *Not Strangers, But Brethren* (American Committee, The World Council of Churches), two brief accounts of these embassies; also, below, pp. 147-48.

of Catholics and Protestants; in the Balkans, of Orthodox and Protestants. Everywhere it is a record of Protestants united. In every area of severest testing—in occupied Europe, in Germany, in China, in Japan, among the youngest churches—fidelity in witness and effectiveness in action have been in direct ratio to the unity of all Christian groups. Old barriers have fallen; ancient antagonisms have been laid aside; Christians of every party have joined forces as never before. It is not a record of any one communion but of all of them together—indeed, of any one only in the measure that its particular work and interests have been caught up within, and strengthened and made secure by, the unity of all. Twenty years ago, in the days of seemingly secure peace and general optimism, that great prophet of a reunited Christianity, the late Bishop Charles H. Brent, cried out: “The world is too strong for a divided Church!” This world of tyranny, persecution, and slaughter has not proved too strong for a united Church. Nothing less than the whole Christian community has proved able “to withstand, and having done all, to stand.”

3. It is a record of churches speaking, acting, and standing steadfast, always in vivid awareness of their membership within a *world community*. Isolated though they have often been, cut off from direct contacts, they have been upheld by contagion of heroism and support from sister churches, often of “enemy” lands. Thus, in a profound sense, it is a record not of particular churches but of a *world Church*. Only a world Church has proved adequate amidst planetary strife.

4. It is a record in which at every point *practical daring* and *spiritual renewal* have gone hand in hand. In every corner of the world where, under adversity or in extremity, the Christian Church has stood unshattered, uncorrupted, and undaunted, it has been empowered to endure by profound

revival of life and faith. This is the teaching of these latter days: The Church is strong just in the measure that it is united; and, where it is united, God grants rebirth.

5. It is a record, in most of its aspects, made possible only by the extension of the Christian movement across the earth in the last hundred and fifty years. The achievements of the Christian churches in wartime are, in large part, a direct fruit of the Christian world mission. In the words of the late William Temple—words which furnished the heart of his enthronement sermon as Archbishop of Canterbury, and which have often been repeated since because they so well gather up the legacy of his vision to the movement which has been irreparably impoverished by the loss of his leadership:

As though in preparation for such a time as this, God has been building up a Christian fellowship which now extends into almost every nation, and binds citizens of them all together in true unity and mutual love. No human agency has planned this. It is the result of the great missionary enterprise of the last hundred and fifty years. Neither the missionaries nor those who sent them out were aiming at the creation of a world-wide fellowship interpenetrating the nations, bridging the gulfs between them, and supplying the promise of a check to their rivalries. The aim for nearly the whole period was to preach the Gospel to as many individuals as could be reached so that those who were won to discipleship should be put in the way of eternal salvation. Almost incidentally, the great world-fellowship has arisen; it is the great new fact of our era. . . .

Here is one great ground of hope for the coming days—this world-wide Christian fellowship, this ecumenical movement. . . .

It is of urgent importance that we become aware of it, that we further it in every way open to us, and that through it we take our part in providing for the Spirit of Christ the agency by which He may transform the world.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *The Church Looks Forward*, pp. 2-4.

## Part

## II

# WORLD CHRISTIANITY YESTERDAY

THOSE who dwell under the shadow of recent events lack perspective rightly to appraise their significance. However, it is not improbable that future historians, looking back in a perspective which is not ours, will fasten upon two facts as the most important regarding Christianity in the period of which we are the immediate heirs.

First, by any reasonable test which might be proposed, the nineteenth century was the most notable in Christian history. In terms of geographic extension, the Christian movement reached to the ends of the earth, penetrating every continent and touching almost every people. In terms of numerical growth, the Christian churches multiplied their memberships manifold, far more rapidly than the corresponding increases in population. In terms of influence upon the whole life of humanity, Christian ideals and effort effected greater reforms and improvements in the lot



of all sorts and conditions of men than had ever been wrought by any single influence in any previous epoch of history. These are among the facts which validate the historian's characterization: "The Great Century."<sup>1</sup>

Second, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the life of the Christian churches in the world was marked by two major developments. Together, these two developments constitute indisputably the most significant feature of Christianity in the modern era. They give to this period of little more than a century a character as distinctive and as distinguished as any previous "great age" of Christian faith—the early Church, the Middle Ages, or the Reformation.

One of these developments was a *movement of expansion*. Its aim was to extend the reach of Christian allegiance to the farthest limits of the earth, so that Christianity might become in fact what it had always been in profession and had never been in fact—a world religion. The other was a *movement of consolidation*. Its ultimate goal was the co-ordination and unification of the multitudinous and diverse branches and agencies of Christian influence into an effective organism, so that the Christian Church might become in reality what it had always been in ideal and had never been in reality—a world community. The movement of expansion, in its major expression, is the enterprise of Christian missions. The movement of consolidation is the effort toward Christian unity.

Through most of the past century each of these developments pursued its own course, with little conscious relation to the other. In the past few decades they have deliberately

<sup>1</sup> These judgments would appear to have been established beyond serious question by Kenneth S. Latourette's massive studies. See especially *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vols. IV–VII; also *Anno Domini*, chaps. v–vi, and *The Unquenchable Light*, chaps. vii–viii.

drawn closer and closer together until today they constitute two intimately related and well co-ordinated arms of a single organism. It is this inclusive organism in its two phases which is coming to be known by the phrase, still stumbling for Anglo-Saxon tongues but of majestic tradition and meaning, "ecumenical Christianity" or the "ecumenical movement." For "ecumenical" means, precisely, "universal." It denotes a reality both world wide and united. It is this two-armed organism which we have in view when we speak of "world Christianity."<sup>2</sup>

Neither of these developments was, in its deeper impulses, new. On the contrary, both had claimed the devotion of all true Christians from the very beginning. They sprang directly from two of the most cherished words which Christians attribute to their Lord in his last hours: on the one hand, his final instructions to his followers, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations";<sup>3</sup> and, on the other hand, his final prayer for his most intimate companions, "That they all may be one." Indeed, the interdependence of the two injunctions was affirmed in the words of that prayer: "That they all may be one, . . . *that the world may believe.*"<sup>4</sup>

In the centuries since, neither objective, Christian missions or Christian unity—that Christ's message be made known to all mankind, and that Christ's disciples be knit into one body—has been absent from the mind and professed devotion of any great leader of the Church, though the necessary relation of the two has not been so universally

<sup>2</sup> On the meaning of "ecumenical" and the distinctive character of these new efforts to fulfill an old ideal, see William Adams Brown, *Toward a United Church: Three Decades of Ecumenical Christianity*, chap. i. Dr. Brown's volume may usefully be consulted for alternative, and in some cases fuller, interpretations of many of the matters treated in this book.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 28:19.

<sup>4</sup> John 17:21.

recognized. The great significance of recent developments is not that they are new in impulsion. But, in these latter days, each has been infused with new power for concrete accomplishment never previously paralleled. Perhaps more important, as never before the two impulses have been brought into that unity which, according to the records, they held in the intention of Christ himself.

Moreover, by a coincidence which later vision may discern as providential, each of these developments came for the first time within sight of a preliminary achievement of its goal just on the eve of the second World War.

Only in most recent years has the Christian mission penetrated the remoter reaches of the earth, so that today there are vigorous and multiplying, if sometimes tiny, cells of the Christian Church among every race and in virtually every land. That fact received graphic illustration at Christmas-tide of 1938, when there gathered at Madras, India, the most widely representative assemblage of men and women drawn from the peoples of the earth which had ever come together under any auspices, meeting under the only auspices which could have summoned so representative an assembly, especially in the fevered days of late 1938—the Christian world mission.<sup>5</sup> In our day, for the first time, Christianity has become a world reality.

Likewise, only in most recent years have the impulses of proliferation and partition which have marked the Christian movement from the outset given way to powerful resolve to draw Christians of varied traditions and outlooks into effective collaboration. This fact also found concrete expression in 1938, when official representatives of virtually all non-Roman churches met in Holland in the spring of that year to form a new body, the World Council of

<sup>5</sup> See Van Dusen, *For the Healing of the Nations*, pp. 112–36.

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Churches. When fully constituted, the World Council will gather into unity most of the earlier essays toward Christian collaboration and will be empowered to speak and act for virtually the whole of Christendom—except the Roman Catholic communion<sup>6</sup>—in a measure never before possible since the great division into Eastern and Western churches in the eleventh century. Only in our day has non-Roman Christendom begun to become in a significant sense a world community.

Thus, for the first time in the nineteen centuries have appeared the promise of a Christian faith which should be truly universal, embracing men and women from every race and culture and stage of civilization, and the possibility of a Christian movement truly ecumenical, representative of all humanity.

In the two following chapters we shall review in turn these two movements, first their earlier histories in briefest summary, and then their recent development somewhat more fully.

<sup>6</sup> This is a mighty exception. In all that follows, that exception, while not reiterated, must be borne constantly in mind. Little of what is said of Christian co-operation embraces the Roman Catholic Church. There is no realistic prospect of participation by that Church as a world body in what is termed "ecumenical Christianity." See below, p. 180.



## Chapter 2

### CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

IN ANY age of transition so profound and crucial as ours, men's first recourse should be to the guidance of history. Our strongest aid, and our most trustworthy encouragement, is historic perspective.

Probably the greatest service of Christian scholarship to these times, and one of the most valuable services in the history of the Church, has been rendered by Kenneth S. Latourette in his monumental *History of the Expansion of Christianity*. This work in seven large volumes furnishes a single comprehensive conspectus of the whole nineteen centuries' pilgrimage of the Christian movement such as Christians have never previously possessed. It is invaluable for its detailed chronicle, century by century and area by area. But not less for certain broad generalizations firmly grounded upon the mass of accurate and exhaustive facts.<sup>1</sup>

The most basic and inclusive generalization to which Professor Latourette is led is that, across the whole nineteen hundred years, the Christian movement has swept in ever wider circles and penetrated with ever deeper influence into the life of the human race.

<sup>1</sup> The main outlines of the history and the major conclusions are embodied in several briefer summaries, most notably *Anno Domini* and *The Unquenchable Light*.

Indeed, to a superficial glance its development appears as a steady progression. Closer scrutiny discovers that progress has not been steady. Rather it has taken place by a series of great sweeps of alternate advance and recession. Dr. Latourette likens them to the movement of a tide in recurrent flow and ebb.

The historian clearly detects four massive epochs of march and retreat.

1. The earliest, stemming directly from the initial impulse in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and pressed forward by the amazing vitality of the early Church, carried the Christian movement through roughly five centuries, until it had penetrated almost every outpost of its original cultural milieu—the world of Greco-Roman civilization, the sway of the Pax Romana—had won recognition as the official religion of the Empire; and had achieved such secure rootage, such overspreading organization, and such intrinsic vitality that it was strong to endure when its surrounding and supporting political, economic, and cultural environment crumbled. Not only to endure, but to bear within its own organism most of the accumulated wealth of knowledge, art, and government preserved in the world which survived the cataclysm.

No religious revolution of comparable dimensions had ever before been wrought in so brief a time. . . . Never before had any religion gained the allegiance of so large a percentage of civilized men. Indeed, in so brief a time never since then has any religion supplanted its rivals among so extensive a proportion of mankind.<sup>2</sup>

This first era bore the Christian movement upon a wave of initial dispersion to approximately A.D. 500.

Then the tide turned. There succeeded a long period of

<sup>2</sup> Latourette, *Anno Domini*, pp. 206, 20–21.

severe decline. It lasted for almost as long as the first great advance, from A.D. 500 to about 950. Professor Latourette points out that it inflicted both the most protracted and the most perilous setbacks which Christianity has ever suffered. The disintegration of Roman rule, the conquests of the Mediterranean basin by successive barbarian hordes from the north, the even more threatening invasions by the Moslem Arabs from the south and southeast—all these together wrested from the Church a full half of the territories which in 500 had been at least nominally Christian, including the lands of its birth and earliest establishment, and estranged a very large proportion of its professed adherents. Never in succeeding centuries has the retreat of the Christian movement before hostile forces been so general and so drastic. By the close of the tenth century Christianity had been reduced to a fraction of its greatest previous strength. It appeared condemned to permanent insignificance, if not to extinction.

2. Then occurred the first of the miracles of revival and recovery. Another great forward movement set in. It continued for some four centuries, roughly from 950 to 1350. It embraced the great Middle Ages. It pressed the geographical extension of the Christian Church far beyond its earlier outmost penetration—to Scandinavia and Russia in the north; to Turkestan, India, and China to the east. It saw Christianity establish itself as the formative heart of culture at the seat of the new civilization, in Europe. Throughout the Roman era Christianity had struggled to win recognition as one religion, then as the religion within a culture dominated by the political power of Rome. Now it widely displaced political rulers as the imperious lord of all existence.

But again vitality slackened. Internal decay, due to intel-



lectual skepticism as well as moral profligacy, set in. External attack, as before most vigorous in the form of resurgent Mohammedanism, pressed hard. The flood wave reached its crest, broke, and fell back. The familiar features were re-enacted—expulsion from frontier outposts, shrinking of the range of influence, shriveling of effectiveness. Christianity was again confined largely within the borders of Europe. Sterility and corruption corroded the power of the Church. The century and a half from 1350 to 1500 marked a period of relapse and loss. This second major phase of regression also threatened to emasculate the Christian movement and to reduce it to an inconsequential role in the world drama.

3. But, once more, recession was followed by another and still more extended advance. It carried the Christian movement through about two hundred and fifty years, from 1500 to the mid-eighteenth century. This is the era initiated by the birth of Protestantism. It was signalized by great creative and expansive energies generated from a stringent catharsis of purification and reform within Roman Catholicism as well as in Protestantism. Again expansion was geographic, intellectual, and cultural. Moving largely though not exclusively on the crest of the daring adventures of explorers and empire builders, the Christian movement planted churches for the first time in North America, among the territories of Spanish and Portuguese conquest in South America, along the coasts of Africa, across Siberia, in Burma, Siam, Indo-China, and the islands of the Pacific. It re-established outposts in India and China. In the Philippines and certain Dutch East India islands Christianity actually became the faith of a majority of the native peoples. Meanwhile, the Church continued to give form and structure and power to culture.

Nevertheless, the sweeping tides of extension did not

continue unbroken. According to a pattern by now becoming well established, an ebb again set in. This time it was briefer and less severe than its predecessors. But the period from 1750 to 1815 must be put down as on the whole an interlude of subsidence. Rationalism and revolution swept Europe. The empires of Spain and Portugal, under whose patronage Roman Catholic missions had won their greatest triumphs, collapsed with inevitable losses in prestige and power for the Christian enterprises associated with them. The Protestant foreign missionary movement had hardly come to birth. "Again an old order was passing in connection with which Christianity had enjoyed a great expansion."<sup>3</sup>

4. This retreat, however, was happily short-lived. In its train followed a period of such prodigious expansion and enlargement of influence that Dr. Latourette has made bold to designate it "The Great Century." So wide-reaching and many-sided were the gains of the Christian movement from 1815 to 1914 that the historian finds it necessary to grant this century as much space as is required for the whole of the preceding eighteen centuries.<sup>4</sup> This is the epoch of Protestantism's great achievements. By virtue of its proximity to our own day and its contributions to our own background, it is the period most familiar to us. Indeed, so close is it that we tend to take it for granted, assuming it to be typical of the entire sweep of Christian history. Thus we overlook its exceptional character and its extraordinary achievements. Because of its special importance for our concern, let us attempt an exercise of imagination in order to bring this period freshly before us.

<sup>3</sup> Latourette, *The Unquenchable Light*, p. 103.

<sup>4</sup> *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vols. IV-VI.

## ii

A visitor from Mars who had chanced upon this planet at the dawn of the nineteenth century would hardly have entertained good hopes for the future of Christianity. For more than a century previous, as we have just noted, in both faith and life the Christian Church had suffered deepening strain, sterility, and loss. In area after area on the fringes of European influence to which Christian missionaries had ventured in the preceding era of vitality and expansion, their frail young churches had sickened and died. In Latin America, the scene of most striking recent advance, Spanish and Portuguese adventurers who had sought to subdue a continent under the joint aegis of sword and cross had dissipated their strength through lust and greed and had brought corruption and disrepute upon the missions which their conquests had planted. The waning vitality of the ruling nations infected the Roman Catholic churches which were their spiritual counterparts. Australia, New Zealand, and most of the unnumbered islands of the seas as yet knew nothing of western culture and religion. In Japan, Christianity had been driven wholly underground. In China and Korea persecution harassed the weakling Christian communities. Here and there—along the littoral of Africa, in India and Ceylon, at a few centers in Malaya and Indo-China, on certain Pacific islands—small and seemingly unimportant Christian outstations could be discovered. Only rarely, as in the Philippines and northern Celebes, had the Church succeeded in winning any considerable proportion of the native populace and in establishing itself as the major religion of non-European peoples. More characteristically, the Christian missions were prevailingly spiritual adjuncts to the outposts of European political or economic

imperialism. Christianity was still quite definitely a European faith. Its fate as a world religion appeared linked to the future of European conquest.

At the same time, its continuance even as the faith of Europeans seemed gravely insecure. Throughout Europe, the only continent where Christianity had succeeded in establishing itself as the dominant religion and where it had flourished with growing power for ten centuries, the Church was speedily losing its hold upon the common people; its claim to the convinced allegiance of the educated and privileged classes appeared already gone. In England and Germany, rationalism, the regnant intellectual vogue, had effected an uneasy liaison with Christian faith to yield a thin and sterile deism. In Roman Catholic lands such as France, rationalism was frankly agnostic or atheistic. Romanticism, the other great enthusiasm of the age, summoned its devotees to a new religion of nature, of feeling, of the spirit, but was hardly less disdainful of the Christian tradition. Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot; Hobbes, Hume, Bentham; Spinoza, Herder, Goethe, Kant—these were the great prophets of the mind of that day. None acknowledged more than lip service to the traditional faith. Meantime the ardor of the masses centered in secular revolutionary movements which, prophetic of the great revolutionary leader of the nineteenth century, dismissed religion as an opiate of the people. This was patently true of the French Revolution, hardly less of Napoleon and those who rallied to his cause.

Moreover, the forces which had undermined Christianity's influence over great thinkers and popular leaders were working their corrosion on leadership within the churches. The result was sterility and even corruption in their worship and practice. John Buchan thus describes the state of re-

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ligion in Scotland toward the end of the eighteenth century:

Nor was there any compensating vigour of life in that church which had once been the chief voice of Scotland. . . . The dominant party, the Moderates, made religion a thing of social decency and private virtues, and their sober, if shallow, creed was undoubtedly a stabilizing factor in a difficult time. . . . The High-flyers, the other party, were equally void of inspiration, and disputed chiefly on questions of church government. . . . The ministers satirized by Robert Burns in his "Holy Fair" were representative types, but little overdrawn, of the then church in Scotland—a church from which most that was vital in the national life was deeply estranged.<sup>5</sup>

The English parallels were even more disquieting:

A sodden coarseness characterized what called itself the best society. . . .

At the opposite social extreme was the great mass of ignorant, restless, half-brutalized population. . . . Drunkenness was almost universal. . . . Every sixth house in London was a gin shop. . . . After nightfall, London was at the mercy of foot-pads and desperadoes. . . . The laws were savage but ineffectual. . . . The prisons . . . were sinks of filth, stench, and disease. . . .

The test of excellence . . . in religion as well as in politics, art, literature, was reason, moderation, good sense. . . . It is said that the two texts on which most sermons were preached . . . were, "Let your moderation be known to all men," and "Be not righteous overmuch."<sup>6</sup>

Nor were these conditions confined to Christianity in Europe. Many Americans of today entertain an exaggerated impression of the influence of Christianity upon the birth and childhood of their nation. True, our continent was

<sup>5</sup> Sir Walter Scott, pp. 15-16.

<sup>6</sup> C. T. Winchester, *The Life of John Wesley*, pp. 71-75, 79.

settled largely by men and women of profound religious faith. But over large areas the initial impulse gradually ran thin. The liveliest minds fell captive to new modes of thought flowing freely across the Atlantic, especially from France. The period of the Revolution and the Constitution was not notable as an age of faith. A famous item records that in Yale College in one of the early years of the nineteenth century not a single student could be discovered who would confess himself a Christian. But Yale was probably not more pagan than other seats of learning. Meantime, the only civilization was concentrated in tiny white settlements fringing the Atlantic seaboard. Beyond these settlements stretched a vast Indian population virtually untouched by Christianity. And in their midst dwelt a rapidly propagating Negro race still largely heathen.

Meantime, the tendency toward division and proliferation which has been such a marked feature—many would say curse—of Protestantism since its beginnings continued apace. The two most recent divisions had given birth to two new sects which were destined to develop into two of the largest and most powerful branches of Protestantism, especially on the North American continent—Methodism and the Disciples of Christ. And the end seemed not yet.

Such were the condition and prospect of Christianity at the close of the Napoleonic Wars. These facts could hardly have failed to paint the main outlines of the picture for the Man from Mars. It is by no means so sure that his attention would have been caught by certain other features well-nigh hidden beneath the prevailing currents of keen but cynical intellectualism, of romantic confidence in man and his future, of revolutionary utopianism, of religious indifference and unbelief. It is unlikely that they would have been pointed out to him by humans who might have

proffered their services as guides and interpreters of the times. He might have traversed the length of Germany and heard no mention of a numerically small and culturally inconspicuous sect known as Moravians. To be sure, in England, John Wesley had stirred to revival thousands among the underprivileged, but few among the molders of thought or leaders of public life. Who would appraise *these* as formative factors for the century just dawning? As for other isolated events—the launching of a number of missionary bodies in England, the founding of the Netherlands Missionary Society in Holland, a gathering of five zealous American undergraduates during a thunderstorm beneath a haystack at Williamstown—few knew of these, fewer still would have estimated them as more than inconsequential gestures against the rising tides of secularism. Yet, in fact, these modest and unnoted beginnings were to wield a larger determination upon the fate of Christianity in the nineteenth century than the speculations of skeptical scholars or the swirling currents of revolution.

As the Martian visitor turned away for the return journey to his planetary habitat, he might well have left a sympathetic message of condolence for the leaders of a movement which once had seemed to possess such vitality, such promise for mankind, but which obviously was now doomed to in consequence, possibly to extinction.

### iii

Let us imagine this same Martian traveler, in his perennial youth, or perhaps his great-grandson, returning for another visit just a century later, before the outbreak of the great international conflict of 1914.

He would find that Christianity had become the professed faith of the Western Hemisphere—the whole of the vast

continents of North and South America with their more than 200,000,000 people; that, in the Pacific basin, the continents of Australia and New Zealand and certain of the lesser islands harbored predominantly Christian populations; that in Africa, Christianity had worked inland from the seacoasts to establish many sizable and vigorous churches among the native tribes. Indeed, at least some beginnings of an indigenous church were to be found in every major country on the face of the earth except one; only Afghanistan still forbade entrance to Christian representatives.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps most noteworthy of all, among the most advanced peoples of Asia, those most deeply rooted in ancient and mature oriental cultures—India, China, Japan—the Christian movement, though counting in its constituency a tiny minority of their populations—not more than 2 or 3 per cent—was now flourishing under the ever more vigorous leadership of native Christians whose influence upon the national thought and life was out of all proportion to their numbers. In those lands Christianity was generally recognized as a factor of first importance for the physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual progress of their peoples.

By any appropriate calculus—numbers of conversions, increase in membership, adventure into new areas, launching of new enterprises, founding of new churches and societies—this was the epoch of Christianity's greatest vitality and most remarkable advance. Christianity had become at last, for the first time in the nineteen centuries of its life, a world religion. More than that. It had validated its claim to be a universal faith, embracing men and women of every race and culture and stage of civilization, from the crudest tribesmen just wrested from cannibalism to the

<sup>7</sup> Other minor exceptions are Nepal and certain of the native states in India.



most cultured and sophisticated descendants of sages who had achieved civilization centuries before Christ and millenniums before our ancestors left their tree huts and their savage ways.

To recount signs of vigor and growth within the Christian movement itself, however, is to note hardly half the story. This was also the period of Christianity's largest influence upon the culture of which it formed a part. The nineteenth century was pre-eminently the century of social advance. It was marked by the greatest succession of crusades for the amelioration and liberation of humanity's life which history records. Beginning with agitation for the ending of the slave trade early in the century, the consciences of men, especially in English-speaking lands, were claimed for one cause after another of human betterment. Prison reform, abolition of chattel slavery, improved factory conditions, the founding of the Red Cross, elimination of child labor, equality for women, universal education, temperance, recognition of the rights of organized labor, public health, care of the insane and the infirm, social services, world peace—these are only the more notable instances in the long list. It cannot be said that Christianity alone was responsible for most of them. But it must be said that men and women driven by Christian ideals to heroic and often sacrificial exertion in their behalf were vital factors in each. In all but one—the rise of organized labor—Christian leadership appears to have been the determinative influence. John Howard, Florence Nightingale, the Earl of Shaftesbury, David Livingstone, William Wilberforce; William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Abraham Lincoln; Keir Hardie and the founders of the British Labor Movement; Washington Gladden, Walter Rauschenbusch—the roll of Christian social pioneers might be lengthened indefinitely. Meantime

the Church was bearing its message of hope and its gifts of practical helpfulness to every continent and virtually every people.

## iv

How are we to account for this unforeseen and epochal achievement of expansion and penetration by Christianity? The answer is to be found in the marriage of certain forces which were born of the times and which characterized secular no less than religious circles with other factors which sprang from the heart of Christian faith and were germinated within the Christian movement itself.

It was an age when the western world was marked by the loosing of titanic and seemingly inexhaustible energies. These energies poured through varied channels and in many directions. They set some men to plumbing the mysteries of nature; hence the scientific movement with its immense fruitage both theoretical and practical. Others found their minds drawn toward a new disclosure and interpretation of mankind's past; hence the historical movement which altered the perspective of the world of learning. Similar incentives moved others along more practical lines. Some gave themselves to employ the findings of the new science in the erection of a new world life made possible by technology. Still others pressed out across the face of the world in political and economic enterprise to bring the resources and peoples of the earth into the service of the emerging technical civilization of the West. Above all, the spirit of the times—its discoveries and inventions, its conquests and achievements—bred in all whom it possessed an immense confidence in the powers of man, that is of western man, and an assured assumption of his "manifest destiny" to rule and liberate mankind, an assumption which seemed amply justified by concrete accomplishment.

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Christians were children of that age. Inevitably they bore its most characteristic imprints upon them. Three of its features especially contributed to the spread of Christianity—awareness of the whole world and some acquaintance with its actualities, practical instrumentalities for expansion, a sense of mission toward all humanity.

But, in every case, influences from secular developments accentuated rather than created their Christian expression. Each of these features was deeply rooted within the Christian consciousness before the emergence of the modern world, indeed from the earliest origins of the Christian movement. Christian faith was intrinsically universalistic; that issue had been fought to triumphant decision in its first decades. It had always looked out toward all mankind, and through the centuries had followed, when it had not preceded, explorers and adventurers in their successive advances. Again, while the Christian movement utilized instrumentalities made available by the modern age, it had sought the same goals long before these instrumentalities were anticipated. Once more, Christianity was inevitably missionary, always taking with earnest literalness its commission to "go to all nations."

Moreover, the vision and energies which Christianity seemed to share with secular enterprises derived less from the spirit of the times than from its own genius. Religion, as William Ernest Hocking has so convincingly demonstrated, is inherently creative; its role is that of "perpetual parentage."<sup>8</sup> When alive, it is forever giving birth to new movements and impelling its devotees forth upon new adventures of the spirit and new crusades for human emancipation. More particularly, the principal secret of Christianity's record of accomplishment in the recent past is to be

<sup>8</sup> *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 13.

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sought in a series of intermittent spiritual renewals and their aftermaths—the Pietistic movement of the early eighteenth century; the Wesleyan revival toward its close; the missionary impulses which made bold in the first years of the nineteenth century to launch new and daring programs for the evangelization of the world at the very hour of Christianity's threatened eclipse; and finally, near the end of the century, another spiritual resurgence inspired by those two extraordinary colleagues, Dwight L. Moody and Henry Drummond. Here, always, are the true source springs of Christianity on the march.

### V

These facts could not have escaped the attention of the Man from Mars on his second visit. One of the most manifest and astounding changes wrought in the life of the world by the intervening century was the radical alteration in the position of the Christian religion with respect to sweep, vitality, and promise. Had he been leaving a message for his Christian friends as he turned his face homeward this time, surely it would have been one of amazement, of congratulations, of high hope. Must we not suppose that he would have chafed impatiently until he could come again to observe further advances by this astounding movement, much the most vigorous and remarkable which the earth had ever seen?

Will anyone challenge Professor Latourette's judgment in placing a terminus to that epoch, and in setting its date as 1914? Whether the decades since have inaugurated a major recession, how long the present period will endure, whether history's final judgment upon it will record gain or loss—these are questions about which we can speculate. We can now give no definitive answers. But we should be

blind leaders of the blind if we did not frankly face the meaning of the time in which we find ourselves. It is the epoch *after* the Great Century, the period of greatest advance. It is an age of transition. Its upshot no one dares forecast. A careful reading of the past in order that we may better discern its import and, as far as lies in our power, more worthily direct the sweep of its turbulent tides—this is a first charge upon the leadership of the Christian Church in our day.

## vi

Here, then, is the main teaching of the history: Over nineteen centuries the Christian movement has spread to an ever wider circumference and permeated with ever deeper imprint the life of mankind.<sup>9</sup> But its progress has been through a sequence of periodic advances and retreats. Today we may be standing close to the beginning of one of the phases of regression.

However, there are secondary conclusions discoverable from such a historical survey, hardly less striking and with even more immediate direction for our thought. Let us note four.

1. Although the centuries clearly portray an alternation of flow and ebb, these have not been uniform and regular. It is no cyclic movement with which we have to do. The figure of the tides, strictly followed, disguises the deeper fact. In Dr. Latourette's phrase: "To date, . . . each ebb has been less pronounced than the preceding one and has been followed by an advance which has carried the faith

<sup>9</sup> Professor Latourette himself employs four criteria to test advance or retreat: (1) geographic extension, (2) birth of new religious movements within the Church, (3) effect of Christianity upon various phases of culture, (4) influence upon individuals. See *Anno Domini*, p. 206.

forward to a new high-water mark in its effect upon mankind as a whole.”<sup>10</sup>

This is most obviously the case as regards geographic extension. In no period of retreat has Christianity lost all the territory penetrated during the preceding expansion. The next advance has always pushed farther than its predecessor.

In the matter of influence upon culture, this is also clearly true in a comparison of the first and second epochs. In the Middle Ages, Christianity held a far stronger grip on the whole life of men in the regions of the world where it was dominant than it had at the heyday of its influence upon the Greco-Roman world. Dr. Latourette believes this is no less true of the later periods. He discovers Christianity a more pervasive factor in the Europe of 1750 than in the Europe of 1350. And he further contends that the mind of Jesus had made a deeper imprint upon the consciousness and consciences of all mankind in 1914 than at any earlier date.

2. The sweep of Christianity in periods of march has been due not to one factor but to the coalescence of several factors. Some of these are within the Christian movement. Some are external to it and even uncongenial to its deepest nature. This, likewise, is a generalization verified in every era of strength. In each, four main factors appear to have furthered the Church's success. Three of them lie within the culture of Christianity, one within the foreign culture which it aims to penetrate. Only one of the four factors, though the most important, springs from Christianity itself.

a) An undeniable adjunct of Christian extension in each of its four most creative periods has been *political conquest or penetration*—what is today designated by the ill-odored

<sup>10</sup> *The Unquenchable Light*, p. 135.

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word "imperialism." This is not to say, as is often done by critics of Christian missions, that the Church has been the ally, even the tool, of secular political powers. Often they have despised the Church and would gladly have been rid of its disturbing challenge to their consciences and their designs. But almost always political penetration has in some measure prepared a setting for the Church's evangelistic work. In the Roman period the advance of the Empire's legions among the barbarian tribes to the north and over the decadent empires of the East opened doors for Christian missionaries; it is a noteworthy fact that the birth of the Christian movement coincided with the reign of the first Roman emperor. The relationship was especially evident during the third epoch of extension, in the advance of Catholic missions among the territories of Spanish and Portuguese conquest in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Again in the nineteenth century, political penetration by western so-called Christian nations brought some new lands within the reach of the Church. Even the employment of armed force has had its influence upon the fortunes of the Christian movement, both in prying open areas for expansion and also in shielding the Church against hostile attack in times of relapse. So convinced a Christian pacifist as Professor Latourette is driven to recognize:

"We must remember . . . that more than once force saved Christianity from grave territorial losses. . . . However incompatible the spirit of Jesus and armed force may be, and however unpleasant it may be to acknowledge the fact, as a matter of plain history the latter has often made it possible for the former to survive."<sup>11</sup>

b) Christian advance has also been intimately related to exploration and discovery, to the penetration of commerce

<sup>11</sup> *The Unquenchable Light*, pp. 32-33.

*and trade.* Here, even less than in the case of political conquest has the relationship been one of direct alliance. Very occasionally, explorers and traders have welcomed the advent of missionaries. More characteristically, the latter have been viewed as impediments to untrammelled exploitation of economic opportunities, tolerated when they have not been definitely opposed. The services of business to missions have been, as with political imperialism, less intentional than fortuitous. Explorers and traders have prospected new lands, established contacts, founded settlements, seized natural resources and sometimes human persons, and exploited all to their own maximum advantage. Representatives of the Christian churches have followed when they have not preceded, to bring the higher and more welcome gifts of civilization—education, medicine, social services, enlightened and spiritual faith.

This question of the relation of Christian missions to political and economic penetration is so much mooted to-day that it warrants careful examination in the perspective of the most recent epoch.

Here history shows no simple or uniform pattern. Nevertheless the overwhelming weight of its evidence is inescapable. During the past century western influence has penetrated the East through three sharply distinguished and often contrasted channels. Western influence is personified in the East today by representatives of three sharply distinguished and often opposed agencies—those of government, of business, and of missions.

Not infrequently the chronological sequence in the advent of these three influences has been the reverse of that just given. Not until the history is carefully examined is one likely to realize how often Christian missionaries were the first representatives of western nations to come among



primitive or non-Christian peoples. They came, characteristically, with their Bible, their books, their printing press, their medical kit, their faith, and a firm resolve to give themselves wholly and until death to the people among whom they settled. They came without dependence on the comforts of western civilization or the protection of western government.

Only later were they followed by representatives of western enterprise—first, itinerant traders stopping for brief stays to bargain with native peoples for their treasures or to seize their persons, and bearing these away to the huge profits of western markets; then, merchants establishing semipermanent centers of exchange; finally, in more recent times, big business taking control of the natural resources and arteries of trade for wholesale exploitation.

Lastly came western government, sometimes at the behest of traders and merchants for the support of their commercial interests, but not infrequently in response to earnest persuasion by the missionaries in defense of the native peoples. Often the intervention of western government was the only possible protection for these peoples against ruthless despoilment and sometimes annihilation at the hands of western business.

One hears much of missions as the vanguard and ally of western imperialism and finance. History shows missionaries and merchants more typically at loggerheads, contending for the support of government in behalf of their respective interests in the native peoples—on the one hand, their education and cultural advance; on the other hand, their exploitation and cultural subservience.

In the East today one meets three types of foreigners—business agents, government representatives, and Christian missionaries. Upon the people with whom they come in

contact they make widely different impressions. In Shanghai shortly before Pearl Harbor, a representative of an American oil concern and an American missionary, friends who had been associated for many years in a dozen civic enterprises, were discussing the far eastern struggle. The missionary inquired: "How do you reconcile the fact that you have spent your whole life making friends with the Chinese people and seeking to establish the finest business relations with them with the fact that you are now working your head off to sell oil to the Japanese military to be used to fuel Japanese planes in the bombing of China's women and children?" To which the businessman replied sadly: "You know the answer. We'd sell to the devil himself if he paid cash." <sup>12</sup>

Generalization on so complex a development over so vast a territory would need many qualifications. But one cannot escape the impression that the influence of missions has been, by and large, overwhelmingly for the solid good of the peoples of the East; that the influence of western government has been ambiguous, with the balance possibly falling toward a favorable account; but that the influence of business, with due allowance made for the material advance which has been its accompaniment, has on the whole been detrimental.

c) The reception of the Christian message is almost always preceded and prepared for by deepening *dissatisfaction with their own culture and faith* on the part of those to whom it comes. There is no better illustration of this fact than the story of the first beginnings. It was to a world fevered with spiritual unrest and longing, teeming with crude and unsatisfying cults and superstitions, that the

<sup>12</sup> For a fuller discussion see Van Dusen, *For the Healing of the Nations*, pp. 159-67.

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earliest Christians brought their gospel of truth and power and fellowship. Here, rather than in the sophistication of Greco-Roman culture, is to be discovered the significant *praeparatio evangelica*. This has been true in the centuries since. The triumphs of Christianity have not been solely or mainly through conquest over strong competitors or through forced superimposition upon unreceptive and unwilling hearers. Rather, Christian faith has come as spiritual riches filling a vacuum, as spiritual medicine healing putrid sores, as spiritual power satisfying profound spiritual longing.

d) However, the decisive and one indispensable factor in Christianity's successive advances, in such widely separated ages and such diverse circumstances, has been—the Christian Church. And the tireless, faith-filled, self-giving zeal and service of its evangelists, the Christian missionaries. Always they have carried three instruments for their work: the Scriptures; humanitarian concern and services; above all, the story and power of Jesus Christ.

3. The impact of the Christian movement has always registered both upon the lives of individuals for their reclamation and upon the structures of societies for their transformation. It has worked about equally in each sphere. History knows nothing of contrast or antithesis between a "personal" and a "social" gospel. Professor Latourette, detailing this twofold influence and, more particularly, quoting Paul's definition of the "fruits of the Spirit," continues:

For untold millions Jesus has meant at least a beginning of these fruits. In some the change has begun suddenly. Drunkards and drug addicts have found power abruptly to break with their chronic weakness, and to break completely and finally. Some have torn a long-cherished hate from their hearts. Others have

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restored stolen property or have done all in their power to make amends for past wrongs. In others the changes have come more slowly, by a gradual development from childhood to old age. Even those who have made a sudden break have not become perfect at a bound. As they have fulfilled the conditions, they have borne more and more the characteristic fruit. Amid all the diversity of creeds, of ecclesiastical organizations, and of forms of worship through which Christians have expressed and nourished their faith, and above all the divisions which have rent the followers of Christ into separate and often quarrelling churches, there is a common and characteristic likeness among those who have begun to enter the Christian experience. The "fruits of the Spirit" are the same and are to be found in individuals in all of the diverse bodies which bear the Christian name. Millions have believed in God as seen in Jesus, in his life, his death, and his resurrection. To them God has been the Father of their Lord, Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus they have loved God and trusted Him. Through Jesus has come to millions a vision of an eternal life of moral and spiritual transformation with the love and adoration of God as at once its means and its goal.

In the collective life of mankind the effects of Jesus have also been characteristic. He has increased reverence for human personality. Those who are believed to be potentially children of God with eternal life before them are not to be despised, but are to be treated with reverence. Jesus has made for self-respect, for fearlessness in a mysterious universe, for education, for intellectual confidence and daring. In his train have come care for the poor and the sick and great movements to combat disease and famine. Remembering that Jesus declared that those who lose their lives save them, that those who would follow him must forsake all, and that he himself came not to be ministered unto but to minister, thousands of Christians have believed that if they are to deserve that name they must give themselves fully in the kind of service which Jesus rendered to his fellows. In the name of Jesus and that the hungry might be fed, they have cleared forests, drained swamps, and introduced new fruits and better methods of agriculture. They have built thousands of hospitals and schools. They have fought war and have en-

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deavoured to find ways of establishing peace. They have combated slavery, prostitution, and entrenched greed. Some have found the strength to struggle against political corruption. Thousands have been given the purpose and the courage to seek to devise economic measures and forms of government which would make possible the worthy development of individuals whose goal is fellowship with the eternal God. Some have gone to the loathsome slums of great cities to bring light and hope to the unhappy denizens. Some have struggled to eliminate the slums. Some have laboured for greater privileges for women and children. Some have taught the blind to read. Others have sought to cure blindness. Some have been moved to express the Christian vision in great music and to put the drama of human salvation into poetry, painting, and architecture. Many of the finest examples of the aesthetic spirit have arisen out of the impulse given by Jesus. Numbers of the greatest attempts of the human intellect to understand the universe and to present in orderly fashion what man can know of his environment have been inspired by the confidence that the Creator and Sustainer of the universe is the God and Father of Jesus and that in Jesus is the key to the meaning of human life and human history.<sup>13</sup>

4. There remains history's most unexpected and in many ways most instructive lesson.

In eras of retreat, loss has often been most acute precisely in those areas where Christianity had seemed rooted in greatest depth and strength, where it was most thoroughly enmeshed within the surrounding culture. As that culture has disintegrated, the Church, its spiritual partner, has suffered gravely. For example, in the first and severest recession, it was not at the fountain sources of the movement, in Palestine and Asia Minor, or where Christian faith had most fully come to terms with Greco-Roman culture and worked out a partnership with it, in Egypt and North Africa, that the Church proved strong to survive the cataclysm. On

<sup>13</sup> *Anno Domini*, pp. 220-22.

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the contrary, just here, where Christianity might have been expected to be impregnable and ineffaceable, it was in fact overwhelmed and virtually disappeared. It was on the frontiers of culture and the Church, in Gaul and western Europe, that Christianity continued robust. And it was from these unpromising outposts that the vital impulses for recovery mainly came.

Thus is indicated the even more usual and more significant obverse of this generalization. In times when the Christian movement is rallying from loss and launching forth on fresh advance, new power is likely to arise not from the old centers of strength but precisely from the areas where Christianity had been young when weakness set in, where its very youth and consequent vitality have enabled its vigorous survival through disintegration, persecution, or defeat, and where its relative disengagement from a dying culture has nurtured independence, experiment, and creative life. After the first recession, forward movement sprang not from Antioch or Alexandria or Byzantium but from Gaul and the borders of civilization. After the second recession, forward movement was resumed not from Rome but from Spain and Portugal and Germany. After the third recession, forward movement was empowered not from central Europe or Iberia, but from Britain and America. The teaching of this arresting fact for our times is obvious. If ours be the beginning of the fourth recession, where shall we most hopefully expect the impulses of vitality for the next advance?

## Chapter 3

### CHRISTIAN UNITY

ON THE eve of the great world conferences of the churches at Oxford and Edinburgh in the summer of 1937, the distinguished professor of political science in Cambridge University, Ernest Barker, wrote in the *London Times*: "Our century has its sad features. But there is one feature in its history which is not sad. That is the gathering tide of Christian union."

At the dinner honoring him on his retirement from active leadership in the Methodist Church in 1944, Bishop Francis J. McConnell prophesied that church historians of the year 2044 will look back on the organization of the World Council of Churches as the most significant event of the twentieth century. "It marks," he said, "the beginning of the end of denominational animosities."

#### i

The present-day movement for Christian unity is both old and new. It is old in impulse, but new in fulfillment.

In impulse, it is as old as Christianity itself. As we have already noted, from the earliest days of the Christian movement of which we have record Christians have felt themselves under constraint by an ideal which they attributed to their Master: "That they all may be one." The relations of

Christians to one another through their Lord, as the Fourth Gospel pictured it, should be as intimate, as necessary, as indissoluble as that of the vine and its branches.<sup>1</sup> This ideal had been developed with greater elaboration by Paul in a figure which, even more than that of the vine and the branches, came to be the well-nigh universally accepted normative conception of the Christian Church: the body and its several members, differing in function and in honor, but each making its indispensable contribution to the whole.<sup>2</sup> But Paul not only enunciated an ideal, he fought valiantly for its realization. He inveighed against party cries: "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas." And he was the central figure in the first threatened major schism in Christian history—the controversy over the circumcision of all Gentiles—and in the first great council of the Church which successfully forestalled a schism—the council at Jerusalem A.D. 49.<sup>3</sup> After Paul, there was scarcely an important leader in the history of the Church of whom it cannot be said that he was an ardent devotee of Christian unity—at least in profession. Origen and Athanasius, Augustine and Aquinas and Erasmus, Luther and Calvin and the Scots and English Reformers, Penn and Wesley and Newman, not to speak of every pope of any stature—each of them confessed the ideal of Christian unity. Yes, and gave some considerable energy of mind and will toward its practical advancement. In impulse, the movement for Christian unity is as old as the Church, and has enlisted virtually every principal figure of Christian history as its disciple.

In another, and more momentous sense, the contemporary movement for Christian unity is something utterly new in Christian history, without notable antecedent or prece-

<sup>1</sup> John 15.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. 12:4-31; Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:4-16; etc.

<sup>3</sup> See Acts 15:1-29.



dent in the whole nineteen centuries. Its novelty, and the significance of that novelty, can hardly be too emphatically underscored. Let us allow it to register clearly in our consciousness, for all intelligent discussion of the possibilities and importance of the many and varied facets of that movement must proceed from this basic recognition.

Here is the pith of the matter. For eighteen hundred years the *mind* of the Christian Church had affirmed the ideal of unity; that ideal had commanded the sincere allegiance of every great leader and of the masses of their followers. But for eighteen hundred years the *life* of the Christian churches had been marked by a steady succession of divisions and schisms. Almost every one of those eighteen centuries saw at least one major new division. Those centuries record hardly an instance of a church union of outstanding importance.<sup>4</sup> With certain few exceptions, so special or inconsequential as hardly to merit attention, the trend within Christendom had been wholly centrifugal. Christians' actual practice had been directly opposite to their profession.

In the last hundred years there has been no noteworthy alteration of ideal. There have been many admirable reaffirmations of the Christian obligation to unity, though few of them can rival in eloquence, weight, or cogency the historic exhortations of Paul, Augustine, Erasmus, Calvin, or Richard Baxter. But in the last hundred years there has been no new schism of major proportions among Christians.<sup>5</sup> There has been a succession of notable concrete

<sup>4</sup> The most important exception is the reunion of the greater part of the Roman Catholic Church, following the so-called "papal schism," at the Council of Constance in 1415.

<sup>5</sup> Exception must be noted in the numerous pentecostal and similar extreme groups which have spawned in recent years. But none of them has as yet developed into a major sect with promise of permanence.

efforts to effect Christian unity, and a very considerable record of actual accomplishment in both Christian co-operation and structural union of churches. The dominant trend within Christendom has been centripetal.

In brief, in this matter for eighteen centuries Christian practice contradicted Christian profession. In these latter days Christian practice has, on the whole, fulfilled Christian profession. This is the deeper significance of the "gathering tide of Christian union" which future historians may recognize as "the most significant event of the twentieth century."

## ii

Let us review the earlier record in summary outline.

A first prerequisite is the abandonment, once and for all, of the widely held myth of an original "undivided Church." History recognizes no such reality. Our earliest accounts portray a considerable number of individual, autonomous, and contrasted Christian *koinonias*, or communities (congregations), differing markedly in organization, polity, worship, and even doctrine. To be sure, most of them, though probably by no means all, recognized profound kinship through loyalty to one Lord and one faith, and cherished, with varying degrees of conviction and earnestness, an ideal of "unity of spirit in the bond of peace," so passionately laid upon them by the indefatigable missionary apostle. But the main effort of Paul and others who shared his passion for unity in Christ was negative rather than positive—not to effect structural or organizational unification, but to moderate the more flagrant impulses of suspicion and hostility and to prevent open conflict. There is not the slightest evidence that Paul, in his figure of the body of Christ, contemplated a single organization of all Christian

churches. In other words, from the outset, the objective was not to preserve an "undivided" Church but to prevent further and more drastic divisions among groups all too loosely knit by purely spiritual bonds. The only "unity of the Church" was a "unity of the spirit," and this was very imperfect and often humiliatingly unspiritual. When this fact is grasped, the whole enterprise of Christian unity is set in new and correct perspective. And this is fundamental.

Moreover, even in those earliest decades there were almost certainly groups and whole communities of those who professed common discipleship to Christ who were not in any real sense in even spiritual communion with each other. We do not know how radical was the cleavage, within the single city of Corinth, of the parties who felt their differences so strongly that they designated themselves "of Paul," "of Apollos," "of Cephas," or how successful was Paul's effort to allay their hostilities through recognition of at least a confessed higher allegiance to Christ. It is improbable that such a situation was confined to Corinth. More serious, there were unquestionably quite independent Christian communities, vaguely hinted in the histories, which were indifferent to the leadership of the Twelve, the Jerusalem Fathers, or Paul, and who pursued a wholly independent course. From the beginning there were sects which, in our familiar terminology, were schismatic and heretical, and they persisted for centuries as relatively small autonomous bodies. More formidable and important were such sizable groups as the Christian Gnostics, Marcionites, Montanists, and Donatists. The vigor of the two latter at the time when the whole Church was supposed to be represented at its "first ecumenical council" at Nicaea is arresting commentary on the concept of an "undivided Church." It is important to note, however, that, divorced thus early

from the discipline and strength of the main line of Christian development, none of them became permanently enduring branches of Christendom.

A second precondition to a historical approach to the problem of Christian unity is drastic revision of generally held ideas of the "great ecumenical councils." Many a layman, not to say minister, supposes that, over a period of some seven centuries, from A.D. 325 to 1054, whenever division threatened the existing unity of the Church, all of its authoritative spokesmen came together to confront a common danger and, by unanimous or majority voice, proclaimed Christian truth and thus settled the matter and quelled the threatened disruption. Sad to say, any such conception is a travesty of fact.

For one thing, the first of the so-called "ecumenical councils," at Nicaea in 325, was not the earliest or the most important general assembly of leaders of the Church. That distinction rightly belongs to the famous meeting at Jerusalem A.D. 49. The circumstances and outcome are familiar. Dispute which threatened Christian unity arose in Antioch as to whether Gentile converts should be compelled to fulfill every provision of the Mosaic Law, especially circumcision. Doubtless the issue was widely mooted throughout the churches as a result of Paul's extraordinarily successful evangelism among Gentiles. It was agreed to submit the matter for decision to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas journeyed thither. Peter defended their practice. James, as presiding elder, pronounced the favorable verdict: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things."<sup>6</sup> Thus overt division was avoided. This first council of Christian leaders was the most successful in the long

<sup>6</sup> Acts 15:28.

sequence in preserving unity in the spirit. Nevertheless, while open schism was averted, the Church through the following decades was sharply divided into two camps—Jewish and Gentile Christianity; the likelihood of a permanent division was eliminated by the gradual disappearance of the Jewish Christian communities.

Nearly three centuries later recourse was again had to church councils to quell differences and preserve the semblance of unity. Constantine, not yet a baptized Christian, had employed the device with gratifying success in handling the Donatist controversy in the West. The East was seething with more violent dispute over the correct theological interpretation of Christ's person. Hence Constantine summoned all the bishops of the Church to assemble at Nicaea in 325. The 318 bishops who responded represented only about a sixth of the bishops of the Empire. As in all the ecumenical councils, they came predominantly from the East. Constantine's principal ecclesiastical advisor, Bishop Hosius of Spain, presided, with the emperor at his right hand. The weight of imperial influence swayed the decisions. The early form of the Nicene Creed was the outcome. Ostensibly, agreement in doctrine was achieved and unity and fellowship were preserved. Actually, the tones of the benediction dismissing the council had barely died away when dispute broke out far more violently than before. How evanescent was the peace secured is suggested in the fact that Athanasius, principal proponent of the victorious position, was banished from his bishopric at Alexandria five times in the next fifty years. It is to be noted, however, that the creed adopted at Nicaea gradually won recognition, to become, next to the Apostles' Creed, the most universally accepted Christian confessional declaration. Nicaea did not beget a permanent division. But it resulted in the Arian

schism, which plagued the unity of Christendom for three centuries.

A sentence or two must suffice for each of the other six so-called "ecumenical councils":

The second, the first Council of Constantinople, in 381, is shrouded in considerable obscurity. It was attended by only 150 bishops. It is revered principally as the traditional source of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed in its final form; but that is a historical error. Perhaps its greatest distinction lies in the fact that, alone in the series, it resulted in no new major schism.

The third, the Council of Ephesus, in 431, was manipulated by a coalition of the bishops of Alexandria and Rome to humiliate their principal rival of Constantinople. The instrument of humiliation was the condemnation of Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople. The outcome was the separation from the rest of Christendom of the Nestorian churches, a schism which persists to this day.

The fourth, the Council of Chalcedon, in 451, looms in Christian history as the formulator of the definitive doctrine on the relation of the divine and human natures in Christ. But it enacted some twenty-eight additional canons which are part of its official findings and which merit study by all who offer the conclusions of the seven ecumenical councils as the appropriate basis for Christian reunion. It drove from the larger fellowship of Christendom sizable groups of churches which continue as independent bodies today—the Armenian Christians, the Copts of Egypt and Abyssinia, the Jacobites of Syria and Mesopotamia, the Malabar Christians of India—all termed Monophysites in Christology.

The fifth, the second general Council of Constantinople, in 553, was summoned by the Emperor Justinian for the

express purpose of giving ecclesiastical authority to certain edicts of condemnation which he had privately promulgated. Attended by only 165 bishops, of whom only six were Westerners and they from Africa, the council dutifully enacted the imperial decrees and thus further exacerbated schismatic divisions in the Church.

The sixth, the third council of Constantinople, 680-81, was likewise occasioned principally by political considerations. To it we owe the adoption of the fantastic—and radically heretical—doctrine that Christ had two distinct and independent wills, one human, the other divine, though functioning always in complete agreement—still the official teaching of the Church Catholic. As a result, another large body of Christians, the Monothelites, who affirmed of Christ a single divine-human will, were driven into schism.

The curtain was rung down on this melancholy sequence in 787 at the seventh ecumenical council, the second Council of Nicaea. Here the issue of dispute was whether pictures, images, and relics might be adored. The decision of the council was affirmative—pictures, the cross, and the Gospels “should be given due salutation and honorable reverence, not indeed that true worship which pertains alone to the divine nature.” The council went further in a canon which prescribed that relics were to be placed in all churches; no churches were henceforth to be consecrated without relics.<sup>7</sup> More than seven centuries were to pass before the practices authorized by this council and developed over the years were to issue in the most decisive and portentous schism in Christian history, the Protestant Reformation.

<sup>7</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, III, 449-60. For a brief summary of the decisions of these councils, see Gaius Jackson Slosser, *Christian Unity*, pp. 5-21.

A bird's-eye review of the so-called great councils of the Church yields certain reflections:

In the first place, the series, spread across four centuries, was marked by steadily diminishing representativeness and real authority, and by steadily diminishing intellectual power and spiritual profundity. With all of its limitations and its very meager fruitage in pacification of controversy, the Council of Nicaea was a notable gathering of many of the greatest Christian minds in a period of singular theological vitality and ability. Its creed, on the relation of Christ to God, though phrased in categories of its time which were intrinsically incapable of expressing the Church's faith and formulated to meet special difficulties which were peculiar to that time, is an achievement of no mean stature, which will probably remain as an authoritative Christian symbol. The formula of Chalcedon, while equally authoritative for Catholic Christendom on the no less vital issue of the relation of the divine and human elements in the person of Christ, met its dilemma by affirming, side by side, the contradictory contentions of the two disputant parties, without serious attempt at reconciliation. Its statement has been called, a trifle irreverently but with only little exaggeration, "to the logical mind, distilled nonsense."<sup>8</sup> Most of the statements of the later councils are unworthy of serious consideration, both because of their inferior quality and because of the political interests which usually determined them.

In the second place, when the findings of these councils are proposed as the basis of Christian union, it is well to know all that they proclaim. For example, it will interest many to realize that subscription to them commits one to these among dozens of similar canons:

<sup>8</sup> See Van Dusen, "The Significance of Jesus Christ," *Liberal Theology: An Appraisal*, pp. 207-9. Cf. William Temple in *Foundations*, pp. 230-31.



## WORLD CHRISTIANITY YESTERDAY

All worshippers must stand while praying on Sundays or during the Paschal season (I).<sup>9</sup>

Clerics are forbidden to lend at interest (I).

No deaconess shall be ordained below the age of forty (IV, 15).

Candidates for bishop's Orders must know the Psalter by heart (VII, 2).

Relics are to be placed in all churches; no church is to be consecrated without relics (VII, 7).

Tonsured persons not ordained lectors must not read the Epistle or Gospel in the ambo (VII, 14).

Women must not dwell in bishops' houses (VII, 18).

But we may take comfort in the canon:

Among the laity, persons of opposite sexes may eat together, provided they give thanks and behave with decorum (VII, 22).

Lastly and most important, all the councils were singularly ineffective in their primary aim—to further Christian concord. Far from proving successful devices even for preserving such Christian unity as then existed, each of the so-called Seven Great Ecumenical Councils of the early centuries except one actually resulted in one or more major schisms. Most of those schismatic bodies—the Nestorians, the Copts, the Jacobites, the Monothelites, and so on—continue to the present day. Richard Baxter's judgment is hardly too severe:

The sad History of Councils too fully proveth . . . that they have been one of the most notorious causes of division and distraction. . . . In a word, Councils of Bishops have been but

<sup>9</sup> Roman numerals indicate the successive councils, arabic numerals the numbers of the canons.

## CHRISTIAN UNITY

Church-Armies of which at first Patriarchs were Generals, and afterwards Popes and Emperors, and came to fight it out for Victory, the sequel being usually Schism and Calamity.<sup>10</sup>

The schisms of the first ten centuries involved relatively small bodies. They are important mainly as illustrative of the failure of church councils to compel unity, and as corrective to much misconception of early Christian history.

We need not linger over the two great schisms which have given us the three main sections of contemporary Christendom—the final separation of Eastern and Western Churches in the twelfth century, and the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth. Or over the multiple schisms within one of those major schisms—the well-nigh infinite proliferation of Protestant bodies which has continued to the very beginning of the nineteenth century.

### iii

Even so cursory a review would be incomplete, however, without some reference to efforts for Christian reunion.

There were several abortive attempts to heal the breach between the East and Rome. Of these, three were of greatest promise.

The early crusades had a double purpose: to free the Holy Land from the grip of the Mohammedan Turks, and to bring the Eastern Church under the Roman obedience. But the behavior of the crusaders and their establishment of political and spiritual sovereignty over great centers of traditional eastern loyalty such as Antioch and Jerusalem served only to outrage Christians of Orthodox allegiance and further to widen the breach.

Two centuries later, when the Saracens had overrun much

<sup>10</sup> *The True and Only Way of Concord of All the Christian Churches*, Part III, pp. 56, 59.

of the domain of the Eastern Churches, Gregory X convened the second Council of Lyons (1274), with the same double objective which had animated the early crusaders. Representatives of the eastern emperor attended and, under the pressure of economic and political extremity, acquiesced in the Roman claims, even to the point of affirming the hated "filioque" clause in the Nicene Creed. But the unity thus negotiated under necessity was short-lived.

Once more, after the passage of another two centuries, when the lands of eastern Christendom were again in desperate plight at the hands of the Turks, the eastern emperor and patriarch sought support from Rome by proposing ecclesiastical reunion. Again, terms of union recognizing the supremacy of the pope were agreed upon. But they won little popular support throughout the East. Meantime, in 1453, the Turks captured Constantinople, and the proposed union fell to the ground.

Many Protestants have the impression that, with the stand of Luther and Melanchthon, Zwingli and Calvin, an irrevocable break from Rome occurred, and that from that time Protestantism and Catholicism pursued independent and hostile courses. Actually, the early post-Reformation years saw several official moves toward reunion, of which the conferences at Marburg in 1529 and at Ratisbon in 1541 were the most important. As late as the Peace of Westphalia, in 1648, the several religious settlements guaranteeing religious toleration all bore the conditional clause "Until, by God's guidance, Christendom is reunited." The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed numerous further essays by individuals, for example by High Churchmen in England; but the attitude of Rome steadily hardened, and all discussions and negotiations came to nothing.

In the meantime, among the various Protestant bodies

themselves there was a veritable network of conferences and proposals. First, between the two great Continental branches, Lutheran and Reformed; then, between the Anglicans and the Lutherans, the Calvinists, and the Eastern Orthodox; also between the Church of England and the numerous other Protestant bodies of Scotland and England. Many of these approaches, especially in the sixteenth century, officially represented whole churches. Others, especially later, were on the initiative of outstanding individuals and groups such as Erasmus, Hugo Grotius, Richard Baxter, the philosopher Leibniz, and Peter the Great of Russia. John T. McNeill has assembled impressive evidence of the passionate concern of all the greatest of the Reformers, excepting only Luther, for Christian unity.<sup>11</sup> The famous declaration of Calvin to Archbishop Cranmer when the latter proposed union of the Anglican and Continental churches voiced the views of many of their Protestant contemporaries:

I wish it could be brought about that men of learning and dignity from the principal Churches might have a meeting; and, after careful discussion of the several points of faith, might hand down to posterity the doctrine of the Scripture settled by their common judgment. . . . So much does this concern me that, could I be of any service, I would not grudge, were it necessary, to cross even ten seas for such a purpose. . . . When the object is to obtain such an agreement of learned men upon strict scriptural principles as may accomplish a union of the Churches in other respects divided, I think it right for me, at whatever cost of toil and trouble, to seek to obtain this object.<sup>12</sup>

Of earnest desire for Christian unity, of proposals seeking bases for such unity, of conferences, correspondence, and

<sup>11</sup> *Unitive Protestantism*.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Calvin to Bishop Cranmer, April 1552. *Letters of John Calvin*, ed. Jules Bonnet, II, 332-33.

negotiations, of determined labors by able and influential leaders, these three centuries report a plethora. But—here is the crucial point—of concrete result, apart from mutual recognition between Calvinists and Lutherans, and between Anglicans and certain Orthodox and Lutheran bodies, the achievement of these centuries adds up to almost exactly zero.

## iv

The dawn of the nineteenth century marks a radical reversal of trends dominant throughout the preceding eighteen centuries in the fortunes of Christian unity. Regnant centrifugal forces which, despite all protestations of purpose and sincere aspirations toward concord, had severed Christendom century by century into ever more numerous, more diverse, and more mutually intolerant groups gave way to gentle—at first almost imperceptible, but steadily swelling—centripetal influences which have effected larger accomplishment in Christian understanding and respect, practical co-operation and federation, and even church union than the most optimistic realist of the late eighteenth century would have dared to forecast. To alter the figure, it is as though deep primordial and resistless tides which had borne Christians and their churches, with all their desire for comity, farther and farther apart for almost two millenniums had yielded to currents, equally profound and equally coercive, drawing these same persons and groups closer and closer together. The new currents have flowed with accelerating pace and momentum straight through the past century and a half. They are moving more powerfully at this moment than ever before in Christian history.

Let us again invoke the mythical figure of the Man from

Mars, and imagine him visiting the earth, this time about a hundred and fifty years ago, in 1795. He would certainly have been struck by the uncounted multiplicity of groups and bodies, each calling itself a Christian church, each professing loyalty to the ideal of a single Body of Christ. But he would have discovered, I believe, not a single organization or fellowship—in a local community or in a nation or on a world scale—which united or even federated churches of different denominational affiliations.

If he were to make a return visit in the year of our Lord 1947, he could hardly fail to be struck by hundreds, probably thousands, of bodies through which churches and whole communions are joined in co-operative action—from city church federations in almost every sizable community in the United States and in many other lands, through county, state, and national councils of Churches, and countless interdenominational boards and agencies, to the keystone in the World Council of Churches.

In 1795—not one. In 1947—thousands. Here is an indication of concrete achievement in Christian unity in the past hundred and fifty years.

No one can possibly appreciate the extent of advance in Christian unity in the past century and a half who has not studied in some detail its many different aspects. It is the whole which is impressive. But that whole is made up of innumerable varied parts.

It is a familiar fallacy of the human mind's longing for simplicity and clarity to ask for a single solution of a complex problem, when solution may come from any one of a half dozen different directions or from several of them together. It is the same fallacious desire which demands one single line of argument in vindication of Christian faith. That faith is not to be likened to a chain of interlocking

links in which the breaking of one link makes the chain fall, but rather to a rope woven of many different strands of varying delicacy and strength, in which the breaking of one or several strands does not seriously imperil the holding power of the rope. Or, to shift the figure, Christian faith is like a great structure supported by many individual pillars, the collapse of no one or several of which topples the structure. As A. E. Taylor has argued, it is the consensus of many different and relatively independent lines of evidence in their common testimony which renders that faith indestructible and well-nigh irresistible.<sup>13</sup>

In somewhat similar fashion, men seek a single straight path to Christian unity—the path of organic church union, or of federation, or of co-operation in concrete tasks; the path which begins at local communities, or at the nation, or on the world scene; the path along which movement together may be made by historic church bodies, or by interdenominational organizations, or by individual Christians, or by some new institution created *de novo* for this purpose. The fact is, no one can possibly foresee along which of those paths quickest and farthest advance toward the ultimate goal can be pressed. Indeed, the experience of this past unique century and a half proves conclusively that—as with the solutions of complex problems or the vindication of Christian faith—the various paths are not mutually exclusive alternatives between which choice must be made. On the contrary, they are complementary and mutually supporting routes toward a common end. “Which method shall we trust,” one is often asked, “the method of co-operation or federation or organic union or nondenominational activity?” The answer is, “Trust none of them—

<sup>13</sup> See Van Dusen, *God in These Times*, pp. 76 ff.; A. E. Taylor, “The Vindication of Religion,” *Essays Catholic and Critical*, pp. 63, 80; and William Temple, *Nature, Man and God*, p. viii.

alone!" "But to which should one give his support and labor?" the questioner persists. "To all of them," is the sound reply. To most of the "either . . . or" dilemmas posed by fallible human logic the right answer is "both . . . and"; and nowhere more surely than in the stumbling progress of social advance. The limitations of human imagination and sympathy, or the less blameworthy limitations of time and energy, may force selection for any individual. Human nature being what it is, he becomes absorbed in his special interest and proclaims it the one true and sure way of Christian unity. He is mistaken. It is precisely the substantial advance pressed in the past century and a half along every one of the paths enumerated, and many more, which constitutes the epoch-making achievement of the movement for Christian unity.

Even to name them within the space available would be like giving the entries in a telephone directory. We may note several hundred individual steps, each national or supranational in scope, each marking a concrete advance (speeches, declarations, pronouncements, or conferences which did not eventuate in action are disregarded) with material significance for the total cause. Only omniscient vision can tell which of them may, in the perspective of the ages, be discovered to have been the most important in forming a true Body of Christ.

Rather than follow a strictly chronological sequence,<sup>14</sup> let us seek some comprehension of the whole by listing the main types of Christian co-operation and union—in our earlier figure, the principal different pathways—with a few representative illustrations of each. For the most part, our illustrations are confined to conferences or organizations

<sup>14</sup> For the chronological development, see Appendix 1, "A Chronology of Christian Co-operation and Union," pp. 259–81.



which were international in membership or in outlook, and to those which have continued, although sometimes in altered form, to the present. We may distinguish eight principal types:

1. *Associations of individuals of different communions*

If one were seeking a date to mark the initiation of the modern ecumenical movement, he might well fasten upon 1795. In that year communicants of the Church of England, of the established Church of Scotland, and of English Independent and Methodist bodies—acting, to be sure, not as representatives of their respective churches but as individual Christians—united to form the London Missionary Society. How unprecedented and momentous was this event is suggested in the impression made upon one of the participants:

We have now before us a blessed spectacle—Christians of different denominations, although differing in points of Church government, united in forming a Society for Propagating the Gospel among the heathen. This is a new thing in the Christian Church. . . . Here are Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Independents all united in one Society, all joining to form its laws, to regulate its institutions and manage its various concerns. Behold us here assembled with one accord to attend the funeral of bigotry.<sup>15</sup>

Three facts about the London Missionary Society deserve note: (1) initially it was wholly unofficial in sponsorship; (2) although thoroughly interdenominational in origin, it eventually became an agency primarily of one of the participating groups, the English Congregationalists; (3) most important, the motive for collaboration was a more effective discharge of missionary responsibility.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Slosser, *Christian Unity*, p. 119.

The parallel American development began fifteen years later, when the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was founded in 1810, likewise originally initiated by individual Christians—Congregational, Presbyterian, Associate Reformed (now United Presbyterian), and Dutch Reformed—for the purpose of united missionary effort; likewise, later developing into an agency of one of these communions, the Congregational.

To the same general classification belong the great Bible societies—the British and Foreign Bible Society, founded in 1804; the American Bible Society, in 1816; and later similar bodies in Holland, France, Switzerland, and other countries. How epochal were these organizations in the thought of those who founded them is indicated in this description of the meeting which launched the British and Foreign Bible Society: "Surrounded by a multitude of Christians, whose doctrines and ritualistic differences had for ages kept them asunder, and who had been taught to regard each other with a sort of pious estrangement, or rather of concentrated hostility, the scene was new."<sup>16</sup> Here, again, it was the need for larger facilities in supplying Scriptures for their missionary work which led Christians of virtually all Protestant bodies to pool resources for a particular purpose. In its implications this fact is noteworthy beyond the recognition it has received from those who participated. By universal consent of all Protestant bodies, the Scriptures are the one ultimate standard of faith and practice. Here we are on bedrock. The Bible is the very core of the Christian life for all Protestant Christians. And, when dealing with the Bible they find that denominational differences are of no significance whatever. It is identically the same Bible for all communions. In

<sup>16</sup> *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, I, 44.

other words, when Christians approach the commonly confessed center and have to do with the one supreme standard and spiritual resource, union is easy and inevitable.<sup>17</sup>

Next to the missionary and Bible societies, the most influential body of this type was the Evangelical Alliance, founded in 1846, with British and American branches in 1846 and 1867; many regard the Alliance as the principal early seed plot of the nascent impulse toward Christian unity. To this same general class belong the World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1883; the World's Christian Endeavor Union, 1895; the Church Peace Union, and the World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches, 1914; and a host of others of lesser importance—the Association for Promoting the Unity of Christendom, 1857; the Laymen's Missionary Movement, 1906; the Men and Religion Forward Movement, 1912; the Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1914; and many others.

All of these originated with *individual Christians* who banded together in disregard of denominational affiliation to further a particular project. With the passage of years, many—for example, the London Missionary Society, the American Board, the Bible societies, the Christian Endeavor, the several laymen's movements—have come into increasingly close relationships, formally or informally, with denominational church bodies. The transition has been from class 1 to class 5.

Under this classification fall also a great variety of missionary projects, often originally founded by one or more denominational societies, but now sponsored and supported by independent boards, yet remaining thoroughly Christian—for example, Robert College in Istanbul and the five other

<sup>17</sup> For the influence of the Bible in Christian missions, and its significance for Christian unity, see further Van Dusen, *For the Healing of the Nations*, pp. 49, 53, 118, 129–31.

higher educational institutions federated as the Near East Colleges; the American University in Cairo; Lingnan University in Canton.

## *2. Conferences of individuals of various denominations*

In the field of interdenominational conferences, likewise, shared interest in Christian missions first blazed a trail which other concerns followed. The precursor of all others was the great interdenominational missionary conference in New York in 1854, followed in the same year by a similar gathering in London; then, at Liverpool in 1860, in London in 1878 and again in 1888, in New York in 1900, and at Oxford in 1907 to plan the eighth in the series, to be held at Edinburgh in 1910. But at Edinburgh those who attended came not as individuals prompted by personal interest, but as officially appointed representatives of missionary societies of the various churches. Thus the transition was made from class 2 to class 4. And finally, with the authorization of a continuation committee which eventually developed into the International Missionary Council, this movement passed over into class 5. Its two subsequent decennial meetings, at Jerusalem in 1928 and Madras in 1938, continued the traditional name of World Missionary Conferences.

The Edinburgh Conference of 1910 is often spoken of as the parent of modern ecumenical Christianity. It was at Edinburgh in 1910 that the late Bishop Charles H. Brent was captured by the vision of organic reunion of the separated churches of Christ, a vision which inspired the Faith and Order Movement to study the problems of church union. It was at Edinburgh in 1910 that the man who was later to become Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, probably the greatest leader of Protestant Christendom in this century and a guiding mind of recent ecumenical de-

velopments, likewise had his imagination quickened as to the realistic possibilities of Christian unity. From the Edinburgh Conference of 1910 sprang impulses which have resulted in the creation of the World Council of Churches, the keystone of the entire ecumenical development.

Somewhat similar has been the evolution in religious education through the series of World's Sunday School Conventions—in London in 1889,<sup>18</sup> in St. Louis in 1893, in London in 1898, in Jerusalem in 1904, in Rome in 1907, in Washington in 1910, in Zurich in 1913, in Tokyo in 1920, in Glasgow in 1924, in Los Angeles in 1928, in Rio de Janeiro in 1932, in Oslo in 1936. The World's Sunday School Association dates from the conference at Rome in 1907.

To the same category belongs a numerous sequence of other conferences—much too numerous even to list—missionary and otherwise. The passage of time has gradually transformed many of these, like the world missionary conferences, from conferences of *individual Christians* into conferences of *official church bodies* (class 4), and then into *continuing interdenominational organizations* (class 5).

### 3. Nondenominational associations

Nondenominational associations have been principally of and for Christian youth. Pioneer of all others was the Young Men's Christian Association, founded by George Williams in London in 1844, followed by American branches, in Boston in 1851, and then in other cities. The several national bodies were federated as the World's Alliance of Y.M.C.A.'s in 1855.

<sup>18</sup> But the first national Sunday school convention in the United States had met in 1832, called by the American Sunday School Union, founded as early as 1824.

## CHRISTIAN UNITY

The Young Women's Christian Association sprang from a number of groups of Christian women started in London in 1855 and in New York in 1858. In 1866 the Boston group adopted the name of Y.W.C.A. The World's Young Women's Christian Association was formed in 1894.

The Intercollegiate Christian Movement in the United States dates from 1877.

The Student Volunteer Movement was founded in 1886.

The World's Student Christian Federation came into being through the leadership of John R. Mott in 1895.

By universal recognition, these world-embracing non-denominational Christian youth movements, especially the World's Student Christian Federation, have been among the most potent, indeed indispensable, forces in furthering the advance of Christian unity on every front. Their contributions have been principally at three points:

a) They have, by daring experiments congenial to youth, prospected the most promising routes toward Christian fellowship and co-operation, and have discovered the circumstances and terms under which progress may most hopefully be expected. In one area after another of unsurveyed problems the W.S.C.F. has pioneered a pathway by which other world Christian movements have subsequently advanced. Especially noteworthy has been its courage in probing the deeper issues which divide Christians, issues of theological conviction which some other ecumenical movements have been hesitant to tackle. Thus it has furnished a testing ground in the conditions of ecumenical co-operation. And not for Christian organizations only. One of the foremost leaders of the League of Nations gave it as his judgment that the most significant experimentation looking toward a sound and stable community of nations had taken place within the World's Student Christian Federation.

b) They have raised up the great bulk of ablest leadership for every branch of the developing Christian unity movement in almost every country. By kindling youths' imaginations with the ideal and hope of a united Christendom, but far more by introducing them into vibrant and prophetic fellowships which transcend all denominational and theological barriers, these associations have convinced Christian youth of the thorough practicability of their ideal and have given them the one effective rejoinder to scoffers and separatists: "I know because I have experienced." The late William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury and probably the most influential person in recent steps toward a world Christendom, testified that it was in conferences of the British Student Christian Movement and later of the World's Student Christian Federation that he first experienced the *reality* of ecumenical Christianity and became converted to its possibility. Many, probably most, of those who now lead the varied phases of this world movement would echo his testimony.

In the Oxford Guildhall one morning during the conference there in 1937, my eye chanced to run along the score or so of men from almost as many countries who stood together at its heart guiding its progress: William Temple, Bishop Azariah, John R. Mott, Hendrik Kraemer, J. H. Oldham, Henry Sloane Coffin, Francis C. M. Wei, Henry Smith Leiper, Visser 't Hooft, Adolf Keller, John A. Mackay, T. Z. Koo, Reinhold Niebuhr, Max Huber. How had it come about that each of these men had caught a vision of Christian unity in thought and action? Then a further fact about the group struck me. They were almost all old friends. How had they come thus to know one another so intimately? To be sure, laterally they had met often in connection with

one or another of the church interests which they represented. But these friendships dated from young manhood. Suddenly the answer flashed upon me: They had learned to know and believe in one another through a common devotion in student days.<sup>19</sup> So it is in almost every world Christian gathering today. The group is able to press forward largely because its leaders are old and trusted friends. It has been said that in the third and fourth centuries when the bishops of Christendom assembled in ecumenical conferences, it was like a reunion of old schoolfellows; almost all had been trained in the theological college of Alexandria. Today, when the leaders of Protestant Christendom come together it is also like a reunion of old schoolfellows. The great majority have been trained within the fellowship of the World's Student Christian Federation.

c) These Christian youth movements have in their own life demonstrated the reality of that ideal to which all the various efforts for Christian unity are in principle committed.

#### 4. *Interdenominational conferences of official representatives*

The number of interdenominational conferences of official representatives of church bodies or boards is legion. A complete list would run into the hundreds.

It is of special significance that the earliest, prophetic of an ever increasing sequence, occurred in so-called "mission lands": the General Conference of Protestant Missionaries in Bengal in 1855—the first of seventeen major gatherings on similar lines between 1855 and 1906; the General Confer-

<sup>19</sup> William Adams Brown quotes Miss Ruth Rouse as having been struck by the same fact at the Oxford Conference. *Toward a United Church*. p. 34.



ence of Protestant Missionaries of China, in 1877 and again in 1890; the Convention of Protestant Missionaries in Japan in 1872. The earliest gathering of this type in lands of the older churches was a conference of officers and representatives of the foreign missions boards and societies in the United States and Canada, projected very modestly and tentatively and not without apprehension in 1893; it gradually developed into the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, 1911.

Of the same type were three of the most notable world Christian conferences of all time, which together have brought forth ecumenical Christianity of today: the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 (itself, as we have noted, the lineal continuation of conferences originally of class 2), followed by those at Jerusalem in 1928 and at Madras in 1938; the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work at Stockholm in 1925, followed by the Oxford Conference of 1937; and the World Conference on Faith and Order, meeting at Lausanne in 1927 and at Edinburgh in 1937.

There is no clearer disclosure of the inner logic which has controlled the entire Christian unity movement through the past century than the development which these three conferences have undergone—from an international missionary conference to the International Missionary Council, and from the conferences on Life and Work and on Faith and Order to the World Council of Churches. Similarly, while the Foreign Missions Conference of North America continues in name merely a “conference,” it today functions as a permanent body with ever enlarging staff, program, and influence. The transition in each case has been from class 4 to class 5.

5. *Interdenominational organizations* (often these represent not communions but boards or agencies of the communions)

In the field of interdenominational organizations for specific purposes, once more, co-operation for missionary effectiveness led the way. Indeed, as with interdenominational conferences, the pioneer was formed on the mission field. The Zenana Bible and Medical Mission of India, organized in 1852 and participated in by Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists, is the earliest of a long and noble succession of specific co-operative projects in mission lands.

To this same general classification belong, among others: The World's Christian Endeavor Union, 1895; the World's Sunday School Association, 1907; the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, originally merely a conference, but for long a continuing body with extensive functions; the roughly parallel federations of missionary societies in many countries—Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Great Britain and Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland; the Missionary Education Movement, 1902; the International Missionary Council, 1921. Also all the specific missionary projects in whose support two or more denominational bodies join—such as the thirteen Christian colleges in China, corresponding educational institutions in almost every other mission area, interdenominational theological seminaries and hospitals, and a vast variety of other joint and co-operative undertakings.

Such interdenominational organizations are, in principle, very similar to church federations (class 7); indeed, they were the precursors of the latter. The difference lies in the

fact that here co-operation is between boards or committees of churches, usually for a specific purpose; church federations unite whole communions officially for general co-operative work.

## 6. *Denominational world associations*

The nineteen churches of Eastern Orthodox affiliation had, from time to time since the division of East and West, met for conference, though such Orthodox ecumenical meetings have been relatively infrequent in recent centuries.

In 1867 the bishops of the Anglican communion throughout the world met in the first Lambeth Conference, which has reassembled about every ten years since. This was the initial world gathering of representatives of a particular Protestant denomination. Between 1867 and 1930 each of the major communions of Protestants which had branches in many countries formed a world alliance or council or convention with periodic meetings:

Anglicans—Lambeth Conference—1867, 1878, 1888, 1897, 1908, 1920, 1930

Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System—1877, 1880, 1887, 1888, 1892, 1896, 1899, 1904, 1909, 1913, 1921, 1925, 1929, 1933, 1937

Ecumenical Methodist Conference—1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931

International Congregational Council—1891, 1899, 1908, 1920, 1930

Baptist World Alliance—1905, 1911, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1939

Lutheran World Convention—1923, 1929, 1935

World Convention of Churches of Christ (Disciples)—1930, 1935

Each of the world denominational bodies is planning its first postwar meeting in 1947 or 1948. To be sure, these world

associations are not interdenominational in character; just the reverse. (As a matter of fact, the relation of "world confessionalism," as it is called, to world interdenominationalism is one of the most baffling and urgent problems in current ecumenical discussion.) But, through their linkage of Christians of diverse national and cultural traditions on a world scale, they represent one expression of the larger development. The world denominational organizations and fellowships hold an important place in contemporary world Christendom.

### 7. *Federations of churches*

To the churches of the United States belongs the credit for initiating the most original contribution of the past half century. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, founded in 1908, was the earliest large association for common purposes and tasks of official, autonomous communions. Here not individual Christians or boards of churches but the churches themselves have formally joined forces. Here the scope of activity is not a specialized concern like foreign missions or Bible distribution or religious education or youth, but the entire sweep of Christian interests which are shared by the member churches.<sup>20</sup>

The American Federal Council is still probably the most highly developed and strongest body of this type. But its

<sup>20</sup> The Federal Council is only one of half a dozen federal agencies through which most of the larger Protestant churches of America cooperate in common tasks. Mention has already been made of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America. Closely parallel in the field of home missions is the Home Missions Council. The International Council of Religious Education serves the boards of education of forty denominations which embrace thirty million of the somewhat more than forty million American Protestants. A plan is now well advanced toward adoption which will unite eight of these national interdenominational agencies into a National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

example has worked its way downward into almost every state and many counties and cities of the United States; there are today over 550 such federations of churches in this country. It has worked its way outward across the earth; today there are national federations of churches or national Christian councils in almost every country of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australasia, and Latin America where different Protestant communions exist in any considerable variety and strength.

Somewhat similar Protestant church councils or federations have been formed in France, 1909; Puerto Rico, 1916; Switzerland, 1920; Germany, 1921; New Zealand, 1941; Great Britain, 1942; Canada, 1944; Poland, 1945; Australia, Hungary, Italy, and Holland, 1946.

Similar in basis and function are the National Christian Councils in lands of the younger churches, which have come into being one by one since the formation of the International Missionary Council in 1921—India, Burma, and Ceylon, 1922; China, 1922; Japan, 1923; the Congo, 1925; the Near East, 1927; Mexico, 1928; the Philippines, 1929; Siam, 1930; Brazil, 1934; South Africa, 1936; River Plate, 1939; Chile, 1941; Peru, 1941; Cuba, 1941.

To this class, likewise, belong the comparatively recent interdenominational world associations of national church bodies—the organizations to which the title “ecumenical movement” is often narrowly applied: the World Conference on Faith and Order, 1927; the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, 1930, an outgrowth of the Stockholm Conference of 1925; and last and climactically, the World Council of Churches, projected in 1938 and still technically “in process of formation.” The American Federal Council, likewise, has furnished the pattern and no small part of the inspiration for this latter body, which by general acknowledgment stands as the culmination and the

keystone of the whole complex effort after larger Christian unity.

Of all the types of interchurch co-operation, this is the most recent. Many regard it as much the most significant and influential form of Christian unity. Indeed, the question is widely mooted whether federation rather than organic union is not the ideal method of expressing the unity of Christians in Christ, and therefore whether such federations rather than the Church of Rome or the mythical "undivided Church" of the early centuries do not furnish the pattern for a reunited Church of Christ. Into that question we cannot enter now, though this is the most important theoretical issue which should engage the attention of serious students of Christian unity. As a matter of historic fact, it may be affirmed that the rapid spread of church federations throughout the world is probably the greatest achievement of the many-sided impulse toward Christian unity, and the growth of these federations may be seen to have had a larger influence than any other upon the movement as a whole.

#### 8. Church unions

Finally, we come to that expression of Christian unity which has always been regarded as climactic, and toward which most of the efforts of earlier centuries were directed—the corporate or organic union of previously separate bodies. Here, once again, only a detailed examination of the record of the past hundred and fifty years, union by union, can possibly convey an adequate impression of the extent of this phase of progress in Christian unity; such an examination lies beyond the limits of this study. We must resort to summary statistics.

Within the period under review there have occurred

close to ninety such unions. Some achieved merely mergers of closely related bodies, occasionally those which had earlier separated. Some involved comparatively small groups. Others were of vast scope and the highest significance. It is important to distinguish unions of so-called "related" communions, that is, within the same general family (such as Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran) from unions of so-called "unrelated" families. Some sixty unions were of the former type (for example, the union of Presbyterians in Scotland, and of Methodists in the United States, England, China, and Korea), but nearly thirty brought together church bodies whose historic antecedents and usually their politics or doctrine were sharply contrasted (for example, the United Church of Canada, the Evangelical and Reformed Church, the Church of Christ in China, the United Church of Northern India, the South India United Church, the Church of Christ in Japan). How far-reaching has been this process of unification may be illustrated by one of the most notable from each of these two types:

a) Since 1800 there have been no fewer than thirteen separate Presbyterian churches in Scotland. A long series of unions has reduced that number to four. But the overwhelming bulk of Presbyterians now adhere to the Church of Scotland, consummated in 1929. In consequence, apart from three tiny dissenting Presbyterian bodies and relatively small groups of Scottish Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, and Congregationalists, Scotland has a single church for all its Protestant citizens.

b) In 1860 there were in Canada twenty-one different denominations of Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational affinities. A succession of unions within denominations was climaxed in 1925 by the formation of the United Church of Canada, embracing all adherents of previous

bodies except a small continuing Presbyterian group. The Canadian Church is all the more noteworthy because it unites representatives of the three great Protestant types—Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational.

Two further facts regarding progress in church union are worth recording. First, all through the earlier decades of the period the great bulk of unions was within denominational families. In the past two decades the proportion has shifted sharply; the numbers of unions of related and those of unrelated churches are exactly equal. Communion which have participated in mergers across family lines include Baptists, Congregationalists, Christians, Evangelicals, Methodists, Presbyterians, Reformed and United Brethren—all the major Protestant denominations except Episcopalians and Lutherans.

Secondly, of the latter and far more difficult and significant type, a disproportionately large number—almost half—have occurred among the younger churches. Indeed, the five earliest unions of churches across family lines all occurred in mission lands. Clearly, the greatest impetus for far-reaching Christian union, and the most significant achievements, are the work of the Christian world mission.

The earth is still peopled by hundreds of diverse and often competing sects. Against the ultimate goal of the reunion of Christendom, the advance thus far may appear insignificant. But against the failures of preceding centuries, it is notable. And in terms of the surmounting of basic obstacles and the establishing of normative precedents, it may confound the most cynical. The present situation may be summed up in this fact: If either of two proposed further unions—that of Presbyterians and Episcopalians in the United States, or that of Anglicans, Methodists, Congrega-



tionalists, and Presbyterian and Reformed in South India—should achieve consummation, every principal church of non-Roman Christendom would be, directly or indirectly, in relations of full organic union or of mutual recognition with every other. The Church of Christ in South India is expected to become a reality in September 1947.

Here is further concrete evidence of a “gathering tide of Christian union.”

Surveying the eight types of Christian fellowship and co-operation distinguished above, we may note that they are arranged in a roughly ascending scale—in terms of formal participation of official church bodies, in terms of difficulty of achievement, and in terms of approximation to the ultimate goal of a united Church. Moreover, the above sequence is roughly chronological. So viewed, two tendencies are clearly discernible:

First, the evolution of conferences and consultations into *continuing organizations*.

Second, the replacement of individual Christian sponsorship by *official church participation*.

## vi

How is this extraordinary development within the Christian churches to be explained? The causes were many. As with the companion impulses of expansion over the same period, some arose from general tendencies in the history of the time, affecting secular no less than religious institutions. Others sprang from the heart of Christian faith and its movement.

Undoubtedly a larger awareness of the world had its importance. But the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries had been the great age of discovery and explora-

tion. This was precisely the period of most numerous and distressing multiplication of Christian divisions.

The new learning, in science and philosophy, in biblical research and theology, was influential. Yet new learning in matters so deeply steeped in tradition as religious belief raised new obstacles to understanding and mutual trust. It greatly widened and deepened the gulf, present from the earliest beginnings of Christianity, between those of inherently conservative and those of progressive cast of mind. Its influence was, on the whole, divisive rather than unitive.

Through the latter part of the past century especially, tendencies toward co-operation across historic barriers were powerfully at work in many spheres of the world's life—in commerce and education, in transportation and communication, in political order. Running strongly before the first World War, they resumed with increased vitality in the decade after its conclusion. For many, they were epitomized in the League of Nations and the hopes which gathered about it. Inevitably, Christians who so generally shared in those hopes and the enthusiasms which they bred were swayed by the same influences. But—and this may be the most significant single fact about these Christian developments—while the movement for Christian unity went forward parallel to world trends in co-operation so long as the latter were in flood, it is during the past fifteen years, when the drift in world affairs has been violently disruptive and disintegrative, that the most far-reaching and noteworthy advances in Christian unity have been recorded. This is the justification for the sober declaration of the Madras Conference, now often quoted: "The decade since last we met has witnessed the progressive rending of the fabric of humanity; it has witnessed an increasing unification of the body of

Christ.”<sup>21</sup> What has been taking place within the churches cannot be described as a “drift.” Rather, it discloses deep and powerful currents pressing, resolute and indomitable, directly against the sweeping torrents of the time.

We must seek the true explanation at a deeper level. Three factors appear to have been chiefly instrumental:

1. A far more serious recognition of Christ’s desire for the unity of those who make bold to claim his name, and a far more earnest acceptance of human responsibility to translate that divine intention into concrete fulfillment.

2. A fundamental redirection of efforts toward Christian unity. Heretofore, comity and church union had largely exhausted the objectives of apostles of Christian unity. Now, attention was shifted to the achievement of actual co-operation in common tasks. Nevertheless, perhaps as a direct outcome of the new orientation, far greater advance toward the earlier objectives of comity and organic union was won than ever before.

3. Behind both these factors was another, more basic and powerful than all others together—*rekindled world missionary outreach*:

- a) It was more adequately to plan and man missionary tasks that the first important interdenominational conferences were held—in New York and London in 1854, and roughly decennially thereafter. It was the eighth conference in this series, at Edinburgh in 1910, which probably generated a larger momentum for every aspect of Christian unity than any other single influence.

- b) It was more effectively to discharge missionary responsibilities that the earliest interdenominational bodies were formed—the London Missionary Society in 1795, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in

<sup>21</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, p. 16.

1810, the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804, the American Bible Society in 1816.

c) It was on the mission field, in India, that representatives of all Protestant communions within an area first united to sponsor a specific interdenominational enterprise—the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, founded in 1852 by Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Methodists. It is worthy of special comment that this occurred in India and that its purpose was educational, more specifically the higher education of women.

d) It is among the younger churches of the mission field that Christian co-operation in virtually every aspect has advanced farthest and fastest. In their educational and medical work the strongest institutions are prevailingly interdenominational in sponsorship and support. In 1925 well over a hundred such union institutions were counted—forty-six in China, eighteen in India, fifteen in Korea, eight in Japan, eight in Latin America, four in Africa, and lesser numbers in other areas.<sup>22</sup> In the two decades since, they have multiplied many times. In theological schools the minds of the oncoming leadership are very generally being formed in interdenominational seminaries. Every major land or region of the younger churches has a National Christian Council or an equivalent organization, embracing most if not all Protestant bodies. Thus co-operation on a grand scale has gone farther and deeper in “mission lands” than in most western countries. Moreover, “not only in achievement and prospect but also in aspiration and determination, the younger churches lead the older ones.”<sup>23</sup>

e) It is the younger churches who are clearest in their

<sup>22</sup> *International Review of Missions*, January 1926, p. 83.

<sup>23</sup> *Unity in Foreign Missions* (report of a joint committee of the Foreign Missions Conference and the Federal Council of Churches on closer relations on the foreign field), p. 7.

conviction of the obligation to organic church union, and most resolute for its realization.<sup>24</sup> It is they who have the most numerous and notable results to report in the achievement of union. The earliest union joining churches of diverse family types—much the most difficult to effect—indeed, each of the first five unions of this kind, was achieved by mission churches. Of ten such unions since 1927, five were among the younger churches—not including those forced by hostile political pressure—a record all out of proportion to their number and strength.

In the decade from 1927 to 1936, of the twenty-three significant negotiations looking toward possible unification, thirteen occurred between two or more younger churches. In this period, of the ten unions fully consummated, six concerned younger churches. . . . In seven areas where missions have planted Christian churches—in China, in North India, in South India, in Siam, in the Philippines, in Puerto Rico, in Japan—unifications of churches which in the parent lands are still separate have been sufficiently extensive to warrant the title "United Church."<sup>25</sup>

f) It is in a land of the younger churches, again India, that there has carefully and painstakingly been developed the most daring scheme for the union of churches adhering to each of the three main types of Protestantism ever attempted—a proposal which marks the most significant advance toward the unity of Christ's Church ever achieved. The South India Scheme, involving the full organic union of Anglican, Methodist, and South India United (Congregational and Presbyterian) churches, has been rightly described as "the most important concrete proposal for

<sup>24</sup> See the declaration of the representatives of the younger churches at the Madras Conference, given below, p. 106.

<sup>25</sup> *Unity in Foreign Missions*, p. 6.

union now before the churches of the world.”<sup>26</sup> When consummated, it will furnish precedents for the solution of every considerable obstacle to Christian unity among all of the communions of Protestantism.<sup>27</sup>

The significance of these facts can hardly be overstated. Through all the Christian centuries three principal motives have impelled Christians to seek a larger measure of unity. The first, with which we began, is their sensitiveness to Christ’s desire and command—“That they all may be one.” The second is political or economic exigency. We saw this as the dominant consideration in the attempts to reunite the Eastern and Western Churches in the eleventh, thirteenth, and fifteenth centuries; and we noted its failure. In so far as analogous motives prompt efforts for Christian unity today, their enduring worth may be questioned. The third has been the rebirth of missionary passion, leading to the double desire to consolidate resources, more adequately to discharge that responsibility, and to present to non-Christians a Church more worthy of its Lord. In 1680 that great prophet of Christian unity, Richard Baxter, gave, as the most promising earnest of success, a deepening missionary consciousness:

An earnest desire of the world’s Conversion, and of the bringing in the barbarous, ignorant, infidels, and impious, to the knowledge of Christ, and a holy life, doth shew a large degree of charity, and of the Unity of the Spirit, which would fain bring in all men to the bond of the same Unity and participation of the same Spirit.<sup>28</sup>

Alongside this statement may be placed the most ringing and moving plea for Christian unity in our time. The formal

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> On the South India Church, see Appendix 4.

<sup>28</sup> *The True and Only Way of Concord of All the Christian Churches*, Part I, pp. 28–29.

Madras *Findings* on unity specifically declare that Christian solidarity demands more than a co-operative expression; that co-operation breaks down in the ultimate stage owing to divided loyalty, and that there "has come in many fields a deep and a growing conviction that the spirit of God is guiding the various branches of His Church to seek for the realization of a visible and organic union."<sup>29</sup>

Even this warmly worded resolution was not strong enough to satisfy the representatives of the younger churches, who requested the insertion of a statement of their own, reading in part as follows:

The representatives of the younger churches in this section, one and all gave expression to the passionate longing that exists in all countries for visible union of the churches. . . . Visible and organic union must be our goal. . . . Such a union alone will remove the evils arising out of our divisions. . . . Loyalty, however, will forbid the younger churches going forward to consummate any union unless it receives the whole-hearted support and blessing of those through whom these churches have been planted. We are thus often torn between loyalty to our mother churches and loyalty to our ideal of union. We, therefore, appeal with all the fervor we possess, to the missionary societies and boards and the responsible authorities of the older churches, to take this matter seriously to heart, to labor with the churches in the mission field to achieve this union, to support and encourage us in all our efforts to put an end to the scandalous effects of our divisions and to lead us in the path of union—the union for which our Lord prayed, through which the world would indeed believe in the Divine Mission of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, the movement of Christian missions and the movement for Christian unity belong together. Usually, in such

<sup>29</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, p. 130.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130–31.

## CHRISTIAN UNITY

matters, theory precedes practice; elaboration of the idea end long antedates its fulfillment in fact. In this case the reverse is true. Historically, Christian missions have always fructified efforts for Christian unity. In these recent years the former has given the latter new reality, fresh impetus, and its most significant fulfillment. The time has come when a relationship which exists in fact should be translated into form and the two should be organically joined. The call comes to us to weld the two branches of ecumenical Christianity into one single world Christian movement.





## Part

## III

# WORLD CHRISTIANITY TODAY

INEVITABLY global war has put world Christianity to its severest test, and in both of its major phases—the Christian world mission and the movement for Christian unity. What does the record show?

In the midst of the war a popular journalist entitled his widely read book *The Battle Is the Pay-off*. If we may employ the vernacular for world Christianity, World War II has proved the “pay-off.” Under the impact of the fiercest and most divisive conflict in history the world Christian movement has stood—shaken, gravely decimated, imperiled, but unbroken and undaunted. More than that, the movement has gone forward—slowly, painfully, but steadily, surely—from month to month and year to year, and in its every aspect. It has not only survived the conflict; for those with eyes to see, it has emerged stronger in its inner reality and vitality than ever before, and more widely respected in the eyes of men.



## Chapter 4

### THE CHRISTIAN WORLD MISSION

ANY attempt to portray the Christian world mission today and to forecast its major problems tomorrow must set such a discussion against the background of the catastrophic convulsion in which the mission has been engulfed this past decade. It must begin with at least a summary account of the ordeal of missions during the second World War and an appraisal of the lessons of this immediate past for the tasks of the immediate future.

#### i

The war struck the Christian world mission in three successive phases:

First, in those dark and bitter months between July 1937 and September 1939, when the great bulk of mankind—including the majority of Christian leaders—refused to recognize that a second World War had broken, and China stood alone against the aggressor in a solitary defense, more costly and no less heroic than the stand of Great Britain in 1940. In its effect upon the world Christian mission, this period may conveniently be extended to April 1940, the end of the so-called “phoney” war in Europe.

Then, from the fateful weeks in the spring and summer of 1940, when the German hordes overran Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, and France, and roughly one eighth of all Protestant missionary work in the world was, almost in a day, cut off from the bases of origin and support on the European Continent, to Pearl Harbor.

Finally, from December 7, 1941 to V-E and V-J days.

a

The record of the Christian movement in China through those years of the nation's supreme trial should be too familiar to require or permit retelling:

—The significance of individual Christians as leaders of the nation in her struggle for survival and her indomitable resistance.

—The thrilling saga of the Christian schools and colleges of China as they, together with the national educational institutions, suffered expropriation, pillage, and destruction of their lovely campuses. They piled books and microscopes into rickshas; trekked—faculty and students together—overland across rivers and mountains, sometimes several thousand miles; set up classrooms, laboratories, and dormitories in warehouses, abandoned temples, even mud caves, and there carried on. It is one of the most remarkable chapters in the agelong chronicle of man's quest for truth and learning; and in it all, the Christian schools have had a noble leadership.

—The largely unheralded heroism of countless Christian missionaries who faced disease, privation, and death to stand immovable as the Japanese hordes swept on, and who ministered to the destitute and wounded, and pleaded the cause of the innocent, winning the reverent gratitude of the whole Chinese nation.

—The simple fidelity of thousands of Chinese Christians, uprooted from homes and possessions and driven into an unfamiliar hinterland, there to start life afresh and build a new sanctuary.

—Above all, the well-nigh incredible spirit of these Christian Chinese—patient, almost free of hatred, faith-full, bountiful.

Here is one of the most glorious chapters of Christian strength and devotion which the centuries record. It has had its most impressive recognition from casual observers with no previous interest in Christian missions—men of the armed forces who contributed regularly to sustain the work they discovered, hardened journalists and correspondents.

Ernest O. Hauser summed up the story in the *Saturday Evening Post*:

Ironically, it was the missionary who saved the day for the white man—the missionary who had never harped on white superiority and the privileges of unequal treaties, who had lived his unpretentious life without indulging in Kiplingesque self-deception. . . . When the great test of the Japanese invasion came along, the missionary did not run away. . . . He stayed with his flock, performing acts of quiet heroism that earned him the praise of Christian and heathen Chinese alike.

“Those missionaries have plenty of grit,” a Chinese businessman . . . told me. “I am not a Christian myself. . . . But your missionaries have proved, in these last years of hardship, that they were more than Bible salesmen.

“They haven’t been afraid of getting right into the mess, and didn’t squawk if they got their fingers dirty. What they did during the rape of Nanking . . . will go down in history as one of the great deeds of humanity. . . .”

I’ve had these views confirmed by hundreds of Chinese, and it seems to me that the foreign missionary is largely responsible for the continued respect the average Chinese has today for the white man.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> June 26, 1943, pp. 64–65.

From similar testimonies two representative statements, one American and the other Chinese, may be cited. Writes Randall Gould, for fifteen years one of the foremost foreign journalists in China:

Today, I am pretty ashamed of myself about missionaries. . . . For [previous] condescension here freely confessed I hope that my present missionary friends will forgive me. . . . Japan's attack on China . . . was a time of supreme test which Christian missionaries met superbly. . . . No honest person of any race or nationality could watch the Christian missionary in China during Japan's brutal onslaught and feel anything but fervent admiration.

Christianity in China has risen to meet its tests victoriously. Its prestige was never higher than at the end of its wartime travail, nor was there ever such prospect for future constructive work.<sup>2</sup>

And Mr. Gould quotes with approval a tribute of the *China Critic*, a Shanghai weekly which "had not always been too charitable in its editorial judgments of things missionary and Western":

One of the many things that have come out of the present war has been the realization that, whatever doubts may have existed in the past, the Christian missions in China fully and indispensably justify their existence. . . . They have definitely found their place in the life of the nation, fulfilling great human needs in its hour of travail.<sup>3</sup>

b

Even more severe blows fell upon the Christian world mission in April, May, and June, 1940. The story of Christian missions from the fall of France to Pearl Harbor is very largely the saga of "Orphaned Missions." That story,

<sup>2</sup> *China in the Sun* (copyright 1946 by Randall Gould), pp. 282, 285, 300.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289.

also, it is to be hoped, is by now sufficiently well known to require only summary recapitulation.<sup>4</sup>

At the outbreak of the war, of the total missionary outreach of the Protestant churches, roughly one half was sponsored from North America, another three eighths from Great Britain and Australasia, and the remaining eighth by missionary societies in Germany, in Norway and Denmark and Finland, in Holland and Belgium and France, in Sweden and Switzerland.

From this final eighth take a single illustration, chosen both because it concerns the largest area and because it is so little known to most Americans. That vast island archipelago which stretches like a jeweled girdle along the equator eastward across the Pacific from Singapore a distance greater than the width of North America and which most of us five years ago might have been embarrassed to locate on the map—the Netherlands East Indies—contains the most numerous and in many respects the most remarkable Christian community in mission lands. Christians in these islands outnumber those in all other countries of the Orient combined. Most of them are no more than one or at most two generations removed from primitive barbarism. Yet here is to be found one of the most remarkable “younger” churches anywhere in the world—the Batak Church of some 430,000 Christians. Here have taken place the most notable conversions from Islam to Christian faith. And on the island of Celebes is one of the oldest and most completely self-sustaining and self-reliant Christian communities in the East, the Minahassa Church, numbering 250,000 Christians.<sup>5</sup> With a few minor exceptions, all Protestant work in

<sup>4</sup> See Van Dusen, *What Is the Church Doing?*, pp. 57-64.

<sup>5</sup> See Van Dusen, *For the Healing of the Nations*, pp. 17-59, and *What Is the Church Doing?*, pp. 58-59, 70-73.



Holland's vast island empire was in charge of Dutch and German missionaries.

Similarly, in great sections of the continent of Africa, and in limited localities in India, China, Madagascar, and other countries, nurture of the tender young Christian communities with their incalculable value and promise for their peoples rested largely if not wholly with missionaries from Germany or France or Scandinavia or the Low Countries, and the work of these missionaries was sustained entirely from their homelands.

Then, in a very few weeks, in the spring of 1940, all channels of communication and support between roughly one eighth of the Christian missionary outreach and the home bases were severed. The Missions thus affected, 120 in all—each Mission not an individual mission station but the work of a great church in an entire area or nation—were scattered in forty countries on every continent except North America. Orphaned Missions, they have been well called.

This was a catastrophe striking separate Christian centers widely scattered here and there across the earth's surface. Obviously only the health of the whole organism of world Christianity could save these isolated cells from death. But was there sufficient unity within the world Church? Or was the term "organism," so often spoken, merely a figure of hope rather than an actuality?

Within a very few weeks a simple yet comprehensive scheme was developed through which Christians in lands still free and able to help could channel their gifts into central treasuries, and from there, funds could be sluiced out across the face of the earth to the points of need. To compress a long and thrilling story into a single sentence: In the last seven years, Christians in tens of thousands of parishes

in twenty free countries all over the world have been sending their dribblets of aid to the Orphaned Missions Fund; and the sizable reservoir of some five million dollars thus provided has discharged help through 120 channels to destitute Christian communities in forty countries on five continents. Aid has been given without regard to race or creed or denomination, but only on the basis of need. The lines of intake and outflow cross all traditional barriers, those of theological outlook and those of confessional allegiance. But also the far wider chasms of political enmity.

Many fascinating, humbling, and inspiring incidents are hidden away within the over-all story. But we dare not permit them to detain us. The main features of the achievement of Orphaned Missions may be gathered up in these statements:

—Not one plea for help has gone without response of help.

—Not one missionary was withdrawn or one mission closed, so far as is known, through lack of funds.

—In the proud slogan of the Orphaned Missions office: "There has been no overlapping and no overlooking."

Beyond any challenge, it is the most notable instance of mutual help among Christians since those earliest days when the tiny Christian communities in Palestine are said to have held all things in common. More than that—it is the most impressive concrete demonstration of the underlying unity of Christ's Church Protestant which has been given in the whole of Christian history. Here again is an achievement wrought within and by the Christian world mission which could have occurred under no other auspices. It has no comparable precedent, even in the history of Christian philanthropy.

## C

The third period dates from December 7, 1941. It brought upon the Christian world mission far more drastic losses and graver problems than either of the predecessors. This was due not primarily to any change in the situation because of America's entry into the war but solely to the radical effects upon a fourth of the territory of missions wrought by Japan's conquests.

In those somber months of early 1942 the Japanese swept down the East Asian coast, over Siam, Burma, and Malaya to Singapore, through the Philippines and the Dutch Indies, out across most of the islands of the Western and Central Pacific and onto the northern shore of New Guinea to the gates of Australia. This vast area thus brought under Japanese domination embraces the homelands of over one fourth of those who have been brought into the Christian Church by the missionary outreach of the preceding century. Within that area dwelt approximately three and a half million Protestant Christians. Only 6 per cent of them were to be found in Japan itself. Eight thousand missionaries ministered to them. Over ten thousand Christian schools and colleges offered them education. Five hundred hospitals were the centers of a vast network of medical help. The whole enterprise was normally supported by about \$1 billion dollars annually from Europe and America. Now this—in Korea and Manchuria; Occupied China; India; China; Siam; Burma; Malaya; the Philippines; Netherlands India; much of Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia—came within the military and political control of the Japanese Empire. The native leaders of those churches, bereft for the most part of their missionary friends and counselors, who had been evacuated or interned, could look for pro-

tection, advice, and assistance only to fellow Christians of the hated conqueror and oppressor, Japan.

For many months, over the whole of that vast territory there hung a pall of silence. Yet through it there flashed occasional glimpses giving some impression of what was taking place. And now that these territories are restored to freedom, we know much of what transpired and are able to construct a dependable picture of the whole. These are among the facts which loom into view:

1. In the first place, it is abundantly clear that these native Christian peoples, many of them just lifted from savagery, rose to their desperate predicament with a heroism, an ability, and a devotion which amazed and shamed the most affectionate expectations of their missionary friends and admirers. In country after country they took over responsibility not only for churches but also for schools and hospitals, orphanages and leprosariums and publications, heretofore directed and financed almost wholly by foreigners. In not a few places they launched forth on unprecedented evangelistic efforts. They maintained not only their own Christian life and work but also those missionary friends who succeeded in remaining with them, and who were wholly without contact with the rest of the world. Thus was demonstrated the unexpected maturity and the profound Christian loyalty of these youngest, least experienced, and least privileged of Christ's churches.

2. Second, with respect to the missionaries, it is clear that most of those who could elected to remain with their native Christian friends, often in precarious hiding in jungles or mountains. There they were discovered as the Allied arms brought liberation and security again. Many who have not yet been counted have paid the supreme devotion in the gift of their lives. In proportion to their numbers, the

toll of missionary dead far exceeds that of the armed forces.

3. One other fact shines forth with special glory. In many places, both native Christians and missionaries were succored and sustained by fellow Christians of the "enemy" nation. It is apparent that, within the limits of their freedom and their imagination, the most responsible Japanese Christian leaders exerted every resource to preserve the reality of a fellowship of service which transcends the fiercest enmities of men. One single incident, reported in cryptic language, illumines the situation with brilliant light. Some months after the conquest of the Dutch Indies there came through the first message from the brilliant young Dutch nobleman who had general supervision of all Protestant mission work throughout Netherlands India. It reported that the Dutch missionaries there were well and free and able to continue at their tasks—"thanks to the friends of K. A. Gawa."

4. The final impression, however, comes to us through the unsolicited testimony of men in uniform. Their reports speak with an almost monotonous sameness. The locations where they have chanced upon outposts of the Christian world mission are as widely scattered as the points of the compass, the scenes as varied as the multifarious amplitude of a prodigal earth, the circumstances as contrasted as the labyrinthine operations of the most titanic military enterprise in history. A jungle hideout in New Guinea, a remote Solomon reef, a Tarawa cave, a cultured Samoan feast, the silence of the African bush, a university campus in Syria, the teeming bazaars of Teheran, the fevered unrest of India, big-game stalking in Assam, the desperate endurance of China's millions, even the solitudes of Alaska—the background shifts. But the picture how little! In each instance, we are told, first of all, of persons of dark skin and unfamiliar culture but of strangely moving poise and strength and

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fidelity, grace and courage and beauty of being; then, of *settlements* equipped with simple yet adequate instruments of health and education and worship, and of *communities* distinguished by a character of life sharply contrasted with their surroundings and seldom if ever witnessed in America; finally, of *men and women of the West*, unpretentious, often modestly furnished by nature and privilege, yet irresistibly impressive. The over-all impression rings like a refrain through all they have to tell:

I have had to abolish from my mind the ideas I had picked up about mission work when at home.

Two years ago I doubt if any type of missionary work would have interested me; but after actually seeing the poverty and tragic sights I'm ashamed of myself.

I must entirely revise my whole attitude to Christian missions.

Back home we had no idea of the good which missionaries are doing.

The missionaries have proved their worth many, many times since we came overseas.

In all fairness I must say the missionaries have done absolutely marvelous work.

If people could only see, they would understand.

I have written from a khaki-colored viewpoint. To see these things is a great revelation that none of us will ever forget.

I wish some of our skeptical people back home could see what their filthy lucre has done for these natives.

Now that I know what missions really are, I'll give freely.

This Doubting Thomas has had all his doubts and question marks as to the value and importance of missions erased.

Gee, I've certainly got a new angle on foreign missions! After having seen these people, I believe in missions.

The best cure I can think of for atheism would be a few days spent with the missionaries here.

Now that I've seen, I sure am going to be a different Christian.

Through such testimony, based upon firsthand observation, the Christian world mission, in the midst of carnage, indeed as an indirect by-product of conflict, has received the most overwhelming and irrefutable vindication in all the nineteen centuries. We may go further. No enterprise in history aimed at the amelioration of humankind and the building of a fairer common life has ever received more decisive approbation.<sup>6</sup>

This new discovery of the character and significance of the Christian world mission has not been confined to members of the armed forces, however. The late President Roosevelt shortly before his death wrote to a friend:

Since becoming President, I have come to know that the finest type of Americans we have abroad are the missionaries of the Cross. I am humiliated that I am just finding out at this late day the work of foreign missions and the nobility of the missionary. Their testimony in China, for instance, during the war, is beyond praise, their courage thrilling, their fortitude heroic.<sup>7</sup>

For the Christian world mission, World War II has been the "pay-off."

ii

Now, let us seek a bird's-eye view of the Christian world mission in its entirety. What are the concrete realities of the world Church today; or, more precisely, what were the realities of that Church as it stood on the eve of the war? Our answer, in the first instance, will be baldly statistical; and the reader must engage in an exceedingly difficult exer-

<sup>6</sup> See Van Dusen, *They Found the Church There: The Armed Forces Discover Christian Missions*, *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> *The Way*, October 1945, p. 21.

cise of imagination to clothe the figures with concrete and rich human meaning.

The population of the earth is estimated at about 2,000,000,000 persons. Of these, roughly two fifths dwell within the so-called "Christian" world—Europe, North and South America—and three fifths live in "mission lands."

Among the total of 2,000,000,000, slightly more than a quarter may be said to have some Christian allegiance; the Christian constituency is about 600,000,000.

Of the Christian grand total, well over half dwell in Europe (almost 400,000,000), while only 90,000,000 are credited to North America and almost as many to South America (61,500,000).<sup>8</sup> The number of Christians in so-called non-Christian lands is variously estimated as between 32,500,000<sup>9</sup> and 46,000,000.<sup>10</sup> In other words, Christians of all the younger churches number about half as many as those in the United States.

Turning now to the proportions of Christians affiliated with each of the three major divisions of Christendom—Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant—we find that all Protestant bodies together list only 138,000,000 among the grand total of 600,000,000 Christians, or less than one fourth (because of the prevailing practice of Protestant churches in counting only adult church mem-

<sup>8</sup> The major obstacle to accurate comparisons is here vividly illustrated—e.g., different principles in determining Christians. Catholics and certain Protestant State churches include all baptized children. Most Protestant churches include only adult church members. This accounts for the relatively high figures for Europe and South America where Catholics predominate, and the low figures for North America where Protestants are in the majority. This difficulty plagues the conscientious statistician at almost every point.

<sup>9</sup> *Interpretative Statistical Survey of the World Mission of the Christian Church*, 1938.

<sup>10</sup> *World Almanac*, 1946. The general figures for the whole world are based mainly on this source.



bers). It is peculiarly difficult to give any figure for adherents of the twoscore Eastern Orthodox communions because of the large measure of uncertainty regarding what has traditionally been much the largest and strongest of them—the Church of Russia. If we seek comparable figures, which must be in terms of all within the active influence of the respective churches rather than their formal memberships, we are probably not far wrong in thinking of Roman Catholics as about two fifths of the total, Protestants another two fifths, and all others—mainly Eastern Orthodox—about one fifth. But in “mission lands” Catholicism and Protestantism divide the total of about 40,000,000 almost equally, since the missionary activities of Orthodox and minor communions are inconsequential.

In summary, then, among the total population of the earth, between one quarter and one third have Christian affinities, divided among Catholics (two fifths), Protestants (two fifths), and Orthodox (one fifth). In all “mission lands” Christians average less than 3 per cent of the populations, divided roughly equally between Catholics and Protestants. This gives us some conception both of the present extent of Christian influence and of the enormous numbers of mankind as yet untouched by Christianity.

They are to be found—these 20,000,000 or so persons affiliated with Protestant churches in “non-Christian” lands—in just over 6,000 mission centers in about 100 countries.<sup>12</sup> One should always remember that a “mission center” does not mean just a church, or even a church-school-hospital, but an organized unit for a considerable area or even nation. For example, there are in connection with these 6,000 centers over 55,000 churches and, interestingly enough, a

<sup>12</sup> The figures for the Protestant world mission are based mainly on the *Interpretative Statistical Survey*.

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slightly larger number of schools and colleges. There are 62,000 Sunday schools. And 3,500 hospitals and dispensaries. And, in addition, a very large number of other adjuncts of the Christian mission which we shall not attempt to consider in detail— orphanages, old people's homes, leprosariums, agricultural institutes, social service centers, publishing houses, and other service agencies. All these have their invaluable place in the total enterprise, and no picture of it is adequate which does not constantly bear them in view.

Who sponsors all this? No fewer than 300 separately organized missionary societies and boards in the lands of the older churches—in Europe, North America, and the British dominions.

Who actually directs this vast and complex enterprise of Christian service overseas? Over 25,000 ordained ministers, both native and foreign; 100,000 native teachers (this ratio of considerably more than four to one as between teachers and preachers gives a hint of the place which education holds in the Christian mission); 20,000 doctors and nurses; and about 100,000 other workers, nationals and missionaries—a grand total of just under 250,000 active workers, or an average of about forty for each mission center. Of these, slightly over 25,000, or about 10 per cent, are foreign missionaries; all the others are of the nationality of the native church and among the fruits of its influence.

And the annual cost? Almost exactly \$60,000,000, of which only slightly more than half is sent out year by year from the treasuries of the older churches of the West, the remainder being contributed on the field.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> It is probable that very considerable contributions from local churches on the field have not been reported in these statistics, so that the grand total of costs should be higher, and the proportion of financial contributions from the older churches correspondingly lower.

One or two points hidden within these figures deserve special note in case they have escaped attention:

1. The typical Protestant mission center consists of close to ten churches, ten schools, somewhat over ten Sunday schools, and, in more than half the instances, a hospital or dispensary, plus other types of institutions. It is manned by about forty workers, four of them foreigners and thirty-six native members of the church. Probably four of the forty are ordained ministers, another three or four are doctors or nurses, sixteen or seventeen are native teachers, and the others, foreign teachers and workers in a variety of special functions. It ministers to an active constituency of about 3,500 persons, of whom 1,000 are actual church members, and the others baptized adherents or adults or children in school. They are supported in their tasks by annual expenditures of only \$10,000, of which \$5,000 is raised there in the field of work, and \$5,000 comes to them from Christian friends in other lands.

2. As pointed out, each church normally has associated with it a school and one or more Sunday schools. There is a hospital or at least a dispensary for every sixteen churches.

3. The number of native leaders is about nine times as great as the number of foreign missionaries.

4. The financial resources come about equally from local contributions and from overseas. Therefore the native leaders have gone about four times as far in assuming direction of their Christian enterprises as in undertaking responsibility for their support.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, that they can make themselves responsible for half or more of the expenses is a statistical indicator of the degree to which the Christian mission has become truly indigenous and of the sound strength of these younger Christian churches.

<sup>13</sup> But see footnote 12, above.

5. For a complete impression of Christianity at work in these lands, the Protestant figures should be roughly doubled to include Catholic work, which at so many points almost exactly parallels that of the Protestant churches.

6. Less than 3 per cent of all persons dwelling in these lands which harbor three fifths of the earth's population are being even touched by Catholic and Protestant churches combined.

One further over-all fact regarding the Protestant world mission must be noted before we turn to fill in the general picture with fuller details. One hesitates to refer to it, but it has vital meaning for our study. As we saw earlier, of the total missionary outreach of all Protestant bodies, roughly one half is sponsored by churches of North America, another three eighths by churches of Great Britain and Australasia, and the remaining one eighth by missionary societies of Continental European countries. But the total numbers of Protestant church members in each of these three major areas of the older churches—the United States, the British Commonwealth, and the European Continent—are not far from equal.

Note what this comparison has to tell us regarding the relative part played by Christians of these three areas in the great missionary outreach of the nineteenth century. British missionaries have brought into the world Church roughly three times as many younger Christians in "mission lands" as have missionaries of Continental societies; missionaries from North America approximately four times as many. In other words, seven eighths of the mission field has been evangelized by Anglo-Saxons, although the mother churches in Anglo-Saxon lands count only about twice as many members as churches of the Continent. The great world mission is predominantly an Anglo-Saxon Christian undertaking.

May I point out, hesitantly and somewhat reluctantly, two very practical implications of this surprising fact? Does it not suggest the appropriateness of some hesitation in assuming the traditional leadership of Continental Protestantism and in accepting uncritically prescriptions for the health and vitality of the Christian Church dogmatically propounded from the Continent? In the past century at least, it has not been from the Continent of Europe that the great evangelistic impulses of missionary power—always the surest barometer of spiritual vitality—have been forthcoming, but from Britain and America.

In the second place, this fact has profound implication for the future of the world mission, and of the wider ecumenical movement. Growth among the younger churches is far more rapid, relatively, than in the parent churches of the West, and should continue to be so. In other words, the proportion of Christians within the world Church who are of Anglo-Saxon nationality and outlook, or who have first learned Christian faith through Christians of these lands, steadily increases.

This has special meaning for future interpretations of Christian truth. The point may be made quite clear in this contrast: In the past, when Protestants from the older churches have assembled in conference—for example, at Stockholm or Lausanne, at Oxford or Edinburgh (1937)—they have very quickly tended to take their natural places along a line, with the representatives of the Continent, strong in prestige and self-confidence, occupying a dominant position to right of center; with the Americans far out on the left wing; and with the British in that position which they delight to occupy no less in ecclesiastical than in political gatherings, in the center, holding the balance of power between embattled proponents from Europe and

America. But when the representatives of the world Church meet in conference—as at Madras—a quite new situation is discovered. Now, Americans and those of churches which claim descent from American churches occupy a full half of the line; the British are somewhat right of center; while Continentals and younger churchmen of Continental heritage are a relatively small and somewhat extreme right wing. What may this portend for the future, as the natural processes of growth in each of the groups makes its influence increasingly felt?

### iii

When we seek to translate these figures into concrete pictures which can feed and enrich our imagination, we confront a baffling paradox. On the one hand, the individual centers of the Christian mission are to be found at such widely scattered points on the earth's surface, in such contrasted climates and situations, among such diverse peoples—from primitive cannibalists to the most cultured Orientals—and their programs are so diversified, that no single description or series of descriptions can convey a faithful impression. Indeed, it is the resourceful *diversity* of work to meet distinctive local conditions and needs which is one of the most inescapable and impressive facts about the world Church.

On the other hand, the six thousand centers of the Christian world mission on every continent are marked by a most extraordinary *sameness*. This is an unexpected, and inescapable, impression made upon anyone who travels widely among them. The same impression is driven home upon one who examines the wealth of discoveries of the Church which have been made by men and women of the armed forces during the course of their service overseas in these

recent war years. With all of its diversity, springing from different origins and adapted to varying situations, the Christian world mission wherever one encounters it is unmistakably one. Not merely in its setting and work, but no less in its inner genius. The explanation lies at a deeper level—the source of the whole in one faith rooted in one Lord. There is no other movement which thus encircles the earth and which is thus basically the same everywhere.

This mark of sameness applies not only to geographical distribution. There is a no less obvious similarity whatever the denominational affinity. The incidents which we noted of the discovery of missions by men of the armed forces reflect the work of almost every branch and every nation of Christendom—Roman Catholic and Protestant; Methodist, Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregational, Reformed, Lutheran, Disciples, Adventist; American, British, French, Dutch, Belgian, Scandinavian, Swiss, yes, and German and Japanese. The divergences among the various Christian communions and between churchmen of different countries are great, are often felt to be vital, and are not to be underestimated. Nevertheless, the fact must be faced that these differences have almost wholly escaped the men in uniform who have encountered the several groups in far places of the earth, and admiration for them has had no appreciable relation to their denominational bases or to denominational kinship between them and their discoverers.

The reason is at least twofold. For one thing, under the exigencies of pioneering tasks amid adverse conditions, Christians of all persuasions tend to develop mutual appreciation, to discover their affinities and to submerge their disagreements. Here is a comment from an American sol-

dier in Africa: "Some black boy will walk up and say he is a Catholic, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, or of some other religion." And from another in India: "They are forgetting all that petty rivalry which we sometimes find at home!"

More important, face to face with the needs of human beings still living in primitive squalor and superstition, or even where the great non-Christian faiths have failed to bring a ministry of healing, enlightenment of mind, emancipation of womankind, and credible, compelling faith, Christianity of whatever persuasion stands in such striking contrast to all that surrounds it that the differences of theology and ecclesiastical tradition fade into relative insignificance.<sup>14</sup>

A further impression is of the comprehensiveness of the Christian program and of the soundness of such a full-orbed ministry to human life. A soldier in Africa notes: "All denominations have, in addition to churches, free schools, hospitals, and fine mission centers where Africans are taught to be ministers." If there are those who still harbor the caricature of a Christian mission as a solitary foreign evangelist exhorting his hearers to forsake their heathen faith and accept his beliefs, such an absurd misconception might well be consigned to the dusty repository of infantile toys and childhood legends. The typical mission consists of three or four buildings—hospital, school, church—from which a team of co-workers with varied gifts and equipment—minister, doctor, teacher, nurse, social worker, agriculturalist—go forth into the community and its environs in multiform but unified service to all who will accept their help. The Christian mission is still teaching men to worship the Lord

<sup>14</sup> For example, the remarkable conversion of seven American airmen by native Christians on a remote Solomon island, recorded on p. 29 above, appears to have taken place in territory originally evangelized by Seventh Day Adventists.



their God with all their hearts, and souls, and minds, and strength. This is the full and authentic Christian gospel. It is also the only program for individual or community which offers promise of true health of body or mind or spirit.

## iv

If these be the realities of the Christian world mission, the question presses: Why do those at home, even those who lead the churches, so generally hold such limited and inadequate views of it?

There are several reasons for this faulty comprehension and perspective. The most important may be suggested by a further question: How much of the Christian world mission beyond that part being conducted by his own denomination does the average American Protestant, even the minister, know anything about? One might as well seek to comprehend Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* if it were played upon a single instrument, whether fiddle or flute; or to appreciate a large and varied family through acquaintance with a single member.

This is not to disparage the work of any single denomination. Quite the contrary. But that work, however laudatory, is a minute fraction of the whole. Yes, and most of the greatest pieces of missionary work today are not under exclusive denominational sponsorship at all. They are union enterprises; there the Christian gospel is played by at least a small orchestra, not a single instrument.

A prominent laywoman in one of our major communions whose missionary work is largely confined to Japan and China recently came upon accounts of missions and native churches in the Pacific, Africa, and elsewhere as they have been discovered by men and women of the armed forces. She remarked:

Having heard all my childhood only about missions in Japan and China—*ad nauseam*, it seemed to my girlhood mind—missions meant to me, old and unattractive spinsters to whom we had to be polite at lunch. The tales of the mission stations in the Pacific Islands were quite new. I am delighted to be able to introduce my son to a new idea of missions by means of these immensely exciting and interesting tales.

Here is the main point: The glory of the Christian mission is not in this or that piece of exceptional work, or in the work of any one of our multitudinous communions. It is—the *Christian movement in its entirety*, in its whole sweep and reach. It is the total impact of the Christian movement which is important—an impact effected by the combined influence of innumerable enterprises, and of unnumbered and unnamed individuals, both nationals and foreigners, who give tirelessly to its tasks their best ability and devotion.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the only rays of light piercing the gloom of our world's present outlook come from the Christian movement. But it would be an exaggeration of the truth. There is no other force spread widely through our contemporary world and disseminating through the whole body of humanity influences for the righting of its wrongs, the healing of its deepest maladies, the bridging of its divisions, possibly even the halting of its fatalistic descent toward conflict and chaos. There is no other agency reaching out toward every corner of the earth, toward every people and every aspect of human life—for health and enlightenment, for reconciliation and redemption. There is no other institution or movement which still holds together the shattered fragments of humanity, as an earnest to all men of what God intended the life of mankind to be and what some day the family of nations may become.

The world-wide movement of the Christian Church! There is nothing else like it in all the world. There has been nothing like it in the whole of human history. The truth is there is nothing which can so much as be compared with it. With all its divisions, its inadequacies, its apostasies, it is today the greatest power for the uplifting of the life of humanity in its every aspect and for the building of a fairer world which this planet has ever seen. Its powerful advance, with incalculable benefit to mankind, waits upon our realization of that FACT—for it is a fact. And then upon our appropriate response to that fact.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See, further, Van Dusen, *For the Healing of the Nations*, pp. 167–200.

## Chapter 5

### THE WORLD CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

WE HAVE followed the movement for Christian unity to the outbreak of the recent conflict. We have noted its many-sided character, the confusingly numerous and diverse forms in which the single impulse to reach across historic barriers and effect a genuine and working community of Christian discipleship has expressed itself—through the association of individual Christians of many affiliations for common purposes; through conferences of individual Christians from different communions around common concerns; through nondenominational organizations such as the great Christian youth movements; through interdenominational conferences; through interdenominational organizations for special or limited purposes; through world associations of the several principal communions; through federations of entire church bodies; and, finally, through organic church unions. We have pointed out that each of these types of Christian fellowship or co-operation has its proper place in the larger picture and its distinctive contribution to the total development; indeed, that each should be regarded as a constituent of the modern move-

ment for Christian unity. We have seen them all come to climax in the proposal, almost on the eve of the second World War, to create a World Council of Churches, which, when it is constituted, will be more fully representative of all Christendom—excepting the Church of Rome—and will be empowered, within defined limits, to speak and act more authoritatively for all non-Roman Christendom, than has been true of any previous organization or conference.

## ii

The question which must arise with all those unacquainted with the facts is: How did a world movement of co-operation survive a world-shattering cataclysm? During global conflict, what possibility was there of maintaining a living world movement? In a world torn by strife, what chance had any effort for greater unity? Above all, amidst a humanity sundered into embattled segments, what reality could be preserved by a universal spiritual fellowship, by a world community?

The answer must be given in a single assertion, and then in a summary of small parts of the supporting evidence. The assertion is one which has already been recorded with regard to world Christianity as a whole: Throughout the war, the world movement for Christian unity pressed steadily forward, strugglingly and slowly, but resolutely and surely, in its every aspect, from week to week and year to year.

Once more, only detailed attention to thousands of discrete events can introduce one fully to the supporting evidence or convey an adequate picture of the whole. Let us follow the reverse order of our earlier analysis.

1. In the matter of organic church unifications, the decade just prior to the war (1927–36) was the most heartening in Christian history. It recorded ten unions, of which

half were between related churches and half between those of unrelated church families. The six years of war (1939-46) witnessed at least seven further full and final unions, of which a majority joined previously unrelated types. (This does not include unions forced by pressure of enemy governments.) In the earlier decade fifty-three approaches to union were reported; in the latter six years over fifty instances of progress. From the point of view of Christian church union, the period of the second World War has been the most notable quinquennium in Christian history.

2. In the matter of national federations of churches, again these six war years have seen the most striking advance of any comparable period. Indeed, more federations came into being during the war than had ever previously existed. At the war's outbreak there were five important national church councils; at its close there were thirteen. Two of the new federations—the British Council of Churches and the Canadian Council of Churches—are probably the most important since the formation of the American Federal Council in 1908. Interestingly enough, the creation of each of these is the direct outgrowth of new co-operation among the churches of Britain and Canada in connection with the World Council of Churches. Each takes its name, and to some extent its form and purpose, from the World Council. Thus the normal sequence of advance, from the smaller to the larger unity, is reversed. The World Council is seen to hold significance not only for the world unity of Christians but for stimulating unity within nations. Councils of churches have also come into being in Poland, Australia, Hungary, New Zealand, Holland, and elsewhere. Among the younger churches new national Christian councils have been organized in the River Plate area, in Chile, Peru, and Cuba. Thus the movement for wider and more

effective Christian co-operation through federation has also grown.

3. Important and heartening as all these developments are, each has occurred within national limits; they do not span the gulfs between nations or, above all, the chasms between enemies. But it is precisely where the divisions of war struck deepest, where the maintenance and increase of world community was most difficult and hazardous, that the greatest advances of these war years are to be discovered.

Happily, almost all the world Christian organizations—the World's Y.M.C.A., the World's Y.W.C.A., the World's Student Christian Federation, the World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches, and the European Central Bureau for Interchurch Aid—had their world headquarters in Geneva. The World Council of Churches, the youngest, was the latest to join the group. It immediately took its place at their center. Under the Council's brilliant and dauntless general secretary, W. A. Visser 't Hooft, these bodies, on the outbreak of war, were quickly formed into an Emergency Committee of Christian Organizations. Their combined secretarial staffs functioned unitedly throughout; all together constituted in effect a single ecumenical Christian movement.

From 1943 onward this world headquarters at Geneva was practically cut off from all of the world except the European Continent. Nevertheless, the staffs and committees there continued to act as an enlightened and inspired general staff for the churches throughout the world, to give form and substance to the reality of world Christianity, and to direct the most extensive program of practical Christian activity which Christ's churches united for action have ever undertaken.

Much of it was concerned with emergency measures demanded by the exigencies of war:

a) *Service to prisoners of war*—provision of books, athletic equipment, and, above all, Bibles and religious literature; organization of study classes and even universities to keep minds from hopeless despondency; mediation of contact with relatives and friends at home; a multifold ministry through personal visitation and correspondence. Up to the end of 1945 the World Council alone had distributed over a million books and pamphlets and 400,000 Scriptures, supplied principally by the Bible societies of Britain, America, and elsewhere. For example, in 1943 over 180,000 Bibles in their own tongue were made available to Russian prisoners. Direct ministry to prisoners was provided largely through the World's Y.M.C.A., which enjoyed a greater freedom for service than was allowed other organizations. What was at stake in these measures was not merely the comfort and happiness of tens of thousands of the most pitiable of war's victims, but minimum health and sanity for many who must take their places of leadership in the tasks of postwar rehabilitation.

b) *Assistance to refugees*—to a small yet important fraction of the millions driven by totalitarian tyranny from their homeland across the face of Europe in quest of crust and roof. The earth has seldom if ever witnessed such mass destitution and suffering. The special responsibility of the Ecumenical Commission for Refugees concerned provision for spiritual needs. But how can help be compartmentalized where hunger, disease, loneliness, fear, and despair weave a single pattern of misery which ravages the whole person? Into such mass need were brought food, clothing, books, games, and—probably more restorative of body as well as spirit—limitless compassion and faith.



c) *Ministry to youth*—especially through organization of studies among refugees, prisoners, and others deprived of normal educational opportunities.

d) *Administration of numerous Christian relief funds* raised by Christian bodies throughout the world—War Prisoners' Aid, World Student Relief, the Central Bureau for Interchurch Aid (now merged with the relief program of the World Council of Churches), Christian Relief and Reconstruction, the Orphaned Missions Fund. The scope and significance of one of these, Orphaned Missions, we have already had occasion to note.

e) *Organization of international consultation and study among Christian leaders of many lands*—on the Christian mind concerning postwar order, and how that mind may effectively be brought to bear upon the decisions of statesmen and nations.

4. The World Council of Churches itself, projected when conflict already lowered, has increasingly taken form and reality. Though still prevented from official consummation, the range of its activities steadily widens, the influence of its leadership steadily deepens. It is today a far more significant force in the life of the churches, the nations, and the world than its founders would have dared to hope had it been permitted a course of normal peacetime evolution.

The war broke just as the individual church bodies throughout the world which, each by official act, must take membership within the Council had received their invitations to adhere. Up to September 1939 forty-eight churches had accepted membership. During the six war years forty-two more were added. Today its 108 member churches from thirty-eight countries embrace representatives of virtually every major branch of Christendom except the Church of Rome and include almost all the

larger Protestant bodies and several from the Eastern Orthodox communions.

The World Council continued with amazing success its normal peacetime activities—dissemination of news of world Christianity throughout its membership; promotion of world study of basic issues on the relation of the Christian Church to the world; the rendering of a variety of services to national bodies; and, most fundamental, advance of fellowship, understanding, and co-operation among Christian leadership to the ends of the earth.

In the meantime, the World Council was projecting its plans for practical service into the postwar period, which, even more than the years of war, may prove the time of supreme testing for world Christianity. A Department of Reconstruction and Interchurch Aid was organized—to reconstitute dispersed congregations and provide them with temporary places of worship, to replenish a gravely depleted ministry, to provide Christian literature to make good the dearth of war years, to organize evangelistic campaigns for spiritual rejuvenation, to rehabilitate decimated Christian youth movements, to reorganize suspended home mission and social work, to rebuild destroyed churches. The staff to man this extensive program of rehabilitation was furnished by various national church groups, under the directorship of the Rt. Reverend J. Hutchison Cockburn, former moderator of the Church of Scotland.<sup>1</sup> The initial member of the staff, the first American representative, the Rev. Theodore C. Hume, lost his life in 1943 when the neutral plane on which he was flying from London to Stockholm to take up his duties was shot down off the Swedish coast, making him the first martyr of the ecumenical movement.

5. Thus far our summary has spoken only of activities

<sup>1</sup> See further below, pp. 150-53.

which can be described and tabulated. Not improbably, the most significant—as they are certainly the most hazardous—expressions of the reality of world Christian community have taken place by means of less public and less tangible avenues. Through the two great neutral oases of Sweden and Switzerland continuous communication was maintained between church leaders of all lands and on both sides of the conflict, excepting only Japan. As Christian opinion, especially on issues of postwar reordering, took shape in one country, it was transmitted through secret channels to collaborators within the ironbound silence of censorship. Toward the end of the war striking evidence was discovered of the extent to which this process of united Christian thought had been carried forward. A careful compilation by the Geneva staff of documents and declarations reaching them from all over the world up to 1944 revealed that there was then actually more nearly a single Christian mind concerning political and economic order than there had been on September 1, 1939, or at any previous date! <sup>2</sup> Could there be more convincing proof of the reality of Christian world community?

Contacts across enemy barriers were not confined to correspondence. By a plan carefully worked out in anticipation of conflict months before war broke, a series of periodic visitations from belligerent enemy nations to neutral centers, and by the Geneva staff to every area of Europe, maintained throughout the six years of struggle personal spiritual fellowship and consultation. With all its multiplicity and intricacy of organization, so baffling to the uninitiated—and even to the initiated—the reality of world Christianity does not consist primarily in institutional relationships at

<sup>2</sup> *Analysis of the Christian Attitude to the Social and Economic Foundations of a Just and Durable Peace* (June 1944). See, further, below, pp. 164-65.

all. It consists in a vast network of personal relationships—relationships of trust and affection. The tissue which holds this organism in life and health and which offers largest promise of growing strength consists mainly of profound understanding and mutual confidence among those charged with leadership in the various branches of Christ's Church. That organism continued to increase in vitality and resilience amidst the world's disintegration.

6. Lastly, the most heartening and impressive manifestations of Christian community were given, not on a world scale, but within individual countries and in particular situations. Indeed, it is well that we be constantly reminded that some of the most heroic and hazardous chapters of the story were written within Germany and Japan. In Germany churchmen operated "underground railways" to speed the escape of imperiled Jews, or shielded and supported those who could not flee. Christians within the German armies and administrations of occupation counseled Norwegian and Dutch Christians to organize their daring programs of effective resistance against German tyranny, which were a principal glory of those "churches in captivity"—of course with certainty of death should their activities be discovered. In Japan, Christians strengthened the structure of their new united Church, and struggled to hold its basis and spirit loyal to the universal Church. And, as we have noted, throughout the vast areas of Japanese occupation where strapping young Christian churches had relied upon counsel and support from the West now withdrawn, both native churches and missionaries were protected and assisted by fellow Christians of the "enemy" country. Four typical instances must suffice:

a) A German army officer, who in student days had been a leader in the German Student Christian Movement,

found himself in a certain city in occupied territory where a former officer of the Student Movement of that land was a parish minister. The latter was also a foremost organizer of the powerful underground movement of resistance against German occupation. The two met and, despite the obvious peril to both of them, spent a long evening in intimate conversation. In reporting the incident, the pastor described their fellowship as "most comforting."

b) In his first public utterance following eight years of internment, Pastor Martin Niemöller spoke of the factors which had brought him spiritual strength through all the trials he had suffered:

Sometimes we Christians in Germany in the past twelve years have realized, with great gratitude, that we did not stand alone in the loneliness of our struggle, but that we have been held up and borne along by the brotherly sympathy and intercession of Christian friends throughout the world, who before the face of God stood up in our behalf.

I will never forget how my old father visited me for the last time in the office of the Gestapo at the concentration camp in Orianenberg and said to me in farewell, "My dear boy, the Eskimos in north Canada and the Batak tribe in Sumatra have sent you greetings. They are praying for you."<sup>3</sup>

c) From the area of Japanese occupation this incident was reported by an American soldier:

I was captured by the Japanese with five of my pals. We were marched along through the jungle with bayonets in our backs. As we marched along toward the Japanese camp I had to see my comrades one by one killed, mutilated, and torn limb from limb. . . . As I watched them fall, I knew that within a few minutes I, too, would be killed as they had been. But somehow, at that moment my only thought was "the sooner the better."

<sup>3</sup> Reported in the *New York Times*, February 21, 1946.

Life for me was over. I said the Twenty-third Psalm. I said the Lord's Prayer, and then I started to think things over. A good bit of the Yankee spirit stayed with me. Die I must, but I determined not to let my captor see my fear. Trembling from head to foot, marching in mud up to my ankles, with a bayonet sticking in my back, I began to whistle the way I used to when I was a small boy and had to go through a dark street. So I whistled as loud as my trembling lips would let me. After a while, to my surprise I realized what I was whistling—

We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing;  
He chastens and hastens his will to make known.  
The wicked oppressing, cease them from distressing;  
Sing praise to his name: he forgets not his own.

Suddenly, from my reverie, I became aware that someone had joined me in my whistling. No, it couldn't be, but it was my Japanese captor. He, too, was whistling the hymn. Soon we both broke into words, he in Japanese and I in English.

The wicked oppressing, cease them from distressing;  
... he forgets not his own.

One after another were the hymns we whistled and sang as we marched through the jungle mud, with me on the front and my captor in the rear, with now his gun in my back. Gradually, the power of the hymn made me relax, and it must have had the same effect on him, for soon I felt his gun fall into place. And still later, he caught up with me, and as we sang, he in Japanese and I in English, I wondered if his thoughts were as mingled as mine. Here we were marching along lifting our hearts in unison in Christian praise to a Christian God of Peace, and yet I was being led to the Slaughter House by him.

I was interrupted in my thinking by his words in perfect English: "I never cease to wonder at the magnificence of Christian hymns."

Startled by his English, I jumped, and we both laughed. Soon we were talking. I asked where he learned to speak English, and he replied that he had gone to the Christian mission schools. "Not Glory Kindergarten?" I asked.

"Why, I started in Glory Kindergarten. How do you know it?"

Then I told him how in Sunday school we had studied about the Congregational schools and churches. We had raised money for Glory Kindergarten and had sent over gifts for them. . . . Then followed a conversation that it is impossible to relate—one that few men have ever had with one another, when surface things are swept away and the soul stands out on top. We talked of war and how the Japanese Christians hate it, of Christianity and its power in the world, of what it would mean if people should ever really dare to live it, of the incomparable value of the missionaries, of Kagawa, of our own ideals for our own homes, our jobs, and our future families. And finally, at his suggestion we knelt in the mud and prayed for suffering humanity around the world, for "His Peace that passeth understanding" and for Peace again on earth and Good Will toward men.

When we arose, he asked if I would take him back as a prisoner to the American headquarters. He said that this was the only way he could live up to his Christianity and thus help Japan to become a Christian nation. And on the way back, he found in various foxholes other Japanese Christians and they too joined me as we walked toward the American headquarters. I shall never forget the hope and joy that came into their eyes as my Japanese friend unfolded to them one by one as he met them, of how we found each other, and why and where they were being taken.

All the way back we talked of the Christian religion. You know, after being born into Christianity, I had taken its teachings for granted. I never shall again. I know now from these Japanese friends what Christ can mean to an individual or a nation that has lived under a hideous system of heathen Gods.

I know that it means the difference between the Japanese atrocities and my new Japanese friends with their high Christian ideals.

We sang in English all the great universal hymns of the ages:—

Faith of Our Fathers  
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

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Lead On, O King Eternal  
The Church's One Foundation  
Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart

When we neared the camp, by mutual agreement they put on poker faces and sombre looks, and I, gun in hand, marched them into our prison camp. After the war is over they will spend their lives keeping alive and spreading an evergrowing Christian community in Japan.<sup>4</sup>

d) Alongside this picture may well be placed the record of one of the most notable American aces, who, when he lost his life in combat, had a greater record of military achievement than any other man in his outfit. All of his earthly possessions, amounting to several thousand dollars, were left by the designation of his will "to build up the people of Japan."

Thus Christian fellowship and collaboration were established and strengthened amidst war's starkest cruelty and fiercest hatreds.

As has been suggested earlier, the test of the reality and depth of the Christian community maintained throughout the war has come, not during the years of struggle, but in the months since, when firsthand contact has been resumed between leaders of churches estranged for four to eight years. After the first World War there followed a decade of strain, distrust, and mutual recrimination as churches of recently enemy nations sought to re-establish friendship.<sup>5</sup> After the second World War, within four months emissaries of Christians in "victor" nations had made bold to journey into recently "enemy" lands with

<sup>4</sup> From a personal letter which has been printed anonymously in a number of missionary periodicals.

<sup>5</sup> As late as 1933, at a Universal Christian Council meeting at Novi-Sad, "war guilt still proved a sensitive topic and much diplomacy was required to keep the peace." W. A. Brown, *Toward a United Church*, p. 84.



messages of greeting to fellow Christians there. An eager welcome, fervent gratefulness, joyous reunion greeted them.<sup>6</sup> Within four months it was possible to reknit the torn and tortured limbs of the body of Christ's world family with ties which give promise of proving firmer and more durable than any known before.

At the great ecumenical service in the Cathedral of Geneva on February 20, 1946, when representatives from a reunited world Christianity for the first time bowed side by side in common worship, Bishop Eivind Berggrav of Norway, himself so recently freed from his long ordeal of internment, voiced the sentiment of all present:

I wondered what it would mean to meet Christians from all over the world. My surprise is that it is no surprise. It was self-evident because in these last years we have lived more intimately with each other than in times when we could communicate with each other. We prayed together more, we listened more to the Word of God, our hearts were together more. This is only the manifestation of what we knew already, that . . . the time is past when the world-wide fellowship of Christians was only an experiment full of hesitation. During the war Christ has said to us: "My Christians, you are one."<sup>7</sup>

For the movement for Christian unity, World War II has proved the "pay-off."

### iii

On his return from the meeting of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches at Geneva in February 1946, an American member of the committee who had there had his first opportunity to appraise the Council as it enters the postwar period, thus summarized

<sup>6</sup> See *The Return to Japan and Not Strangers, But Brethren*.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in *The World Council of Churches: Its Process of Formation*, p. 14.

his impression: "If the World Council is still in process of being born, it must be the livest embryo this world has ever seen."

The fact is, the organization and work of the Council are developing so rapidly that an account of it written today is certain to be obsolete before the description reaches the reader. I have stressed that the World Council is only one aspect of the multiform movement for Christian unity, the keystone of an arch composed of many stones of varying sizes and kinds. But it is the keystone. By forming a picture of the keystone in its intimate relation with the parts we may gain some conception of the whole.

The visitor to Geneva seeking acquaintance with the headquarters of ecumenical Christianity would make his way to 17, Route de Malagnou, and find himself in the spacious grounds of an attractive Swiss château where, increasingly, the manifold branches of the movement have their physical center. Here are the offices of the Council itself, of its multiplying subsidiary and auxiliary departments, and also of a considerable number of other organizations engaged in ecumenical tasks.

Near by the main building, the visitor's attention would be caught by a stable now transformed into offices, and so swarming with personnel and so humming with activity that he might suspect that, in the old figure, the "side show is crowding out the main tent." This is the base of the World Council's Department of Reconstruction and Inter-church Aid. Nor would the impression be wholly mistaken, for the staff of this department is several times that of the parent body, and its annual budget totals about \$5,000,000, in comparison with the pitifully modest \$71,000 which the hundred member churches are providing for the regular work of the major organ of their ecumenical life. Almost

the latest of the World Council's subsidiaries, it may well serve as a starting point for our introduction to the Council's present reality.

### 1. *Department of Reconstruction and Interchurch Aid*

In September 1943, during the visit to Geneva of Samuel McCrea Cavert, general secretary of the American Federal Council, the tasks of reconstruction which would press their claims upon the World Council as soon as the war should cease were faced, and initial plans to meet them were laid. In April 1945, the Rt. Rev. J. Hutchison Cockburn, former moderator of the Church of Scotland, came to Geneva to direct the department's program; a happier leadership could not have been secured, for Dr. Cockburn has brought to this testing responsibility superlative qualities of statesmanship, of energy coupled with unhurried patience, of firmness united to understanding compassion.

The governing committee, appointed by the Provisional Committee of the World Council, consists of twenty members from seventeen churches and thirteen nations. In each of the "giving" countries—(the United States, Great Britain, the British Dominions, Switzerland, Sweden, and Denmark)—interdenominational agencies or committees receive funds from the various church bodies, and then allocate them to the relief and reconstruction tasks of the department. In each "receiving" country, interchurch reconstruction committees scrutinize appeals and propose priorities which are then validated by the Reconstruction Department and forwarded to the "giving" countries. Thus a major task of the Reconstruction Department itself is to consolidate requests, appraise relative needs, recommend grants, and co-ordinate the entire undertaking. In this fashion, divisive competition and wasteful overlapping are

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reduced to a minimum. The amalgamation with the Department of the European Central Bureau for Interchurch Aid, which since 1922 had carried forward similar work under Adolf Keller, has added resources of tested experience and a high tradition.

The program is carried forward by a closely knit staff representing half a dozen countries and a dozen or more church bodies. There are several secretaries who are full appointees of the department. Others are "lent" by "giving" churches, while still others who have major responsibilities for their own denominations serve in close relation to the department as "ambassadors." From the American churches alone, the Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Disciples, Congregational-Christian, Evangelical and Reformed, Northern Baptist, and Protestant Episcopal communions are supplying personnel in one or more of these three categories.

Through this ecumenical "clearing house" have been channeled hundreds of thousands of dollars in direct aid to needy churches of the Continent, not to speak of very large additional sums forwarded directly from giving churches to sister European churches. Some sense of the magnitude and multiplicity of the program is given by a mere listing of the major projects: <sup>8</sup>

a) *Wooden churches* as temporary replacements for the thousands all over the Continent destroyed by bombing and shellfire.

b) *Supplements to pastors' salaries* rendered almost valueless by spiralling inflation.

c) *The re-equipment of destitute pastors* with such urgent necessities as furniture, bedding, linen, utensils, clothing, shoes.

<sup>8</sup> *The World Council of Churches: Its Process of Formation*, pp. 153-56.

d) *Theological literature* for both seminaries and pastors. In the first nine months 73,000 Scriptures, 200,000 catechisms, 150,000 hymnals, and thousands of theological volumes were distributed from Geneva. In addition, committees in Great Britain and the United States are supplying libraries of especially selected books published in English during the war period.

e) *Special appropriations for evangelism* and evangelistic literature.

f) *Support of Christian social work* in France.

g) *Aid to refugees*. See, further, below, pp. 155-56.

h) *Means of transport*—bicycles and an occasional motorcar—for pastors in areas where normal communication has completely broken down.

i) *Grants to churches for general needs* of unusual urgency.

j) *Material aid* (food, medicine, bandages, vitamins, shoes, clothing, blankets) to supplement the wholly inadequate relief of government-sponsored schemes—a need so great as to require a special Division for Material Aid.

k) *Scholarships for theological students* to enable those in countries where theological education has ceased to study elsewhere, and to enable a few of the especially promising to study abroad. The seminaries of the United States are co-operating to welcome some thirty European theological students in the year 1946-47.

l) *An Ecumenical Church Loan Fund* to tide over the necessities of churches without immediate resources.

m) *A sanatorium* for convalescence and rehabilitation.

As though these tasks were not sufficiently diverse and costly, there should be added a considerable list of supplemental projects, all crying for adoption and awaiting only sufficient funds for implementation.

Yet this is only such part of the postwar relief program of united Protestantism as pertains to the European Continent. Responsibility for needs no less pressing among the devastated churches in the Pacific war zone is being undertaken by the foreign mission boards of the sending countries through the International Missionary Council and such national bodies as the Foreign Missions Conference. Roughly parallel projects and budgets for that program should be added to complete the picture. In all, not less than \$100,000,000 will be required for world church aid, of which American churches have undertaken to provide 80 per cent over a five-year period.<sup>9</sup>

I spoke of the Orphaned Missions Fund as the most comprehensive and noteworthy enterprise in co-operative relief ever undertaken by Christ's Churches Protestant. Here are the same principles of intelligent compassion, of wisely directed vision, and of effective collaboration projected into a postwar situation which shadows the churches of the world with the most staggering needs—and the most glorious opportunity for practical demonstration of mutual aid—which they have ever confronted.

Closely related to the program of reconstruction are two further projects which engaged the World Council heavily through the war years and which continue into the present:

## 2. Service to prisoners of war

A year after the termination of hostilities some millions of German prisoners still remained behind barbed wire

<sup>9</sup> The American participation in this program of aid to churches in both Europe and Asia is organized and correlated by Church World Service, through which most of the Protestant communions unite their relief aid. Church World Service is itself one of the most notable illustrations of interdenominational co-operation on the grand scale. Its goal for a six-month period, from June 1 to December 31, 1946, totaled \$15,000,000.

within victor lands, mostly at forced labor in rebuilding the devastation wrought by their own military forces.

The work among them becomes harder as the prisoners become increasingly disillusioned. . . . Their spiritual situation is even more difficult than when the armies were still fighting. They feel more and more like "pariahs," suffering from an unjust and undeserved fate. . . . But the work remains rewarding, for there are still active Christian communities in the camps, . . . and these appeal for help through personal counseling, Bibles, and literature. . . . One of the characteristic features of the Church in Captivity is its real and conscious feeling of belonging to a community which goes beyond its own. . . . Captivity has awakened in the prisoners the "ecumenical sense." Though isolated they feel sustained by an invisible network of prayers.<sup>10</sup>

The World Council is also interceding with governments in behalf of an early return of prisoners to their homelands:

The Administrative Committee of the World Council of Churches calls the attention of the governments concerned to the continued indeterminate detention of prisoners of war in allied hands as a matter of grave anxiety to the churches in Europe and America. While recognising the efforts of the respective governments to secure satisfactory treatment for the prisoners, it feels bound to emphasise the steady deterioration in morale, and the increasing failure of all attempts designed for re-education due to the complete uncertainty in the prisoners' minds as to the duration of their captivity and the fate of their families.

It therefore addresses an urgent appeal to those governments of the United Nations which are still keeping men and women of the ex-enemy nations as prisoners of war to accelerate their release, and to frame and publish without delay a definite scheme of repatriation giving clear information as to the approximate dates at which different categories are to be repatriated.

<sup>10</sup> *The World Council of Churches: Its Process of Formation*, pp. 84, 170.

It also proposes that an appeal be issued to nationals of enemy countries, including prisoners of war, to volunteer for work, under satisfactory conditions and for adequate pay, in those countries which need labour for purposes of reconstruction.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. *Ecumenical Commission for Refugees*

Within the millions of displaced and homeless persons whose tragic plight harasses all sensitive consciences, the thousands of Christians of Jewish ancestry who constitute the special responsibility of the churches are a relatively small number. And, in the total effort in their behalf carried on by the intergovernmental committees for refugees, the International Red Cross, the Friends Service Committee, and many other groups, especially the great Jewish organizations, the work of the churches is a small segment. But, under the inspired and undiscouragable guidance of Adolph Freudenberg, a program of remarkable vigor and of effectiveness all out of proportion to its limited resources has been going forward since February 1939. The special concern was for Christian refugees, and the initial task was spiritual ministry; but, in true loyalty to Christian compassion which recognizes no distinctions where want presses, help has been rendered to all within reach and to the whole range of human need. War's end has brought no conclusion to this problem; rather, it has heightened its poignancy for those for whom long-cherished hope has now vanished.

Toward midnight one day last August, I was leaving Bloomsbury House in London after a late evening's work. In the dark hallway I was accosted by a distraught figure epitomizing utter degradation, which had emerged from the basement and pleaded in an unfamiliar tongue for protection. A fellow refugee, strained beyond the limit by

<sup>11</sup> Resolution adopted at Horsham, England, August 1946.



long-endured suffering, had gone beserk, and was imperiling the lives of companions in misery. Here, in the building where this work had been begun seven years before, it was still quietly being carried forward. In France, in Italy, in Hungary, even in Shanghai, especially in Switzerland, the ministry of practical helpfulness and sustaining faith must be continued. "For many of the homeless, the Church Universal has become their real and only home."

Also closely related to the task of reconstruction, yet reaching out into the farther future is the World Council's newest, and one of its most hopeful projects:

#### 4. *The Ecumenical Training Center*

Through the generosity of John D. Rockefeller funds have been made available to launch a program aimed directly at "the most urgent need of the world today"—Christian leadership. The lovely Chateau de Bossey at Céligny, near Geneva, has been acquired as an ideal locus. Here groups of sixty carefully chosen men and women of special promise come for intensive training. Primary emphasis is being placed upon lay men and women who desire to prepare for Christian service through their several secular vocations, but opportunity is open also to lay folk preparing for church work and to some theological students and younger pastors; and the Chateau will welcome ecumenical committees and conferences of various kinds, especially during the summer period. The intensive training courses are three months in length; and the curriculum includes Bible study, modern evangelism, the principles of Christian leadership, contemporary movements of thought, the social forces with which the Church must reckon, the relation of the gospel to the political order, and the life of the ecu-

menical Church. The director is Hendrik Kraemer of Holland; the warden, H. Louis Henriod of Switzerland.

Thus, in collaboration with similar training centers for lay leadership which have sprung up in Sweden, Holland, and elsewhere, resolute and imaginative attempt is being made to give concrete reality to two of Protestantism's cardinal, and largely neglected, principles—"the priesthood of all believers" and "the sacredness of all callings."

### 5. *Youth Department*

The world interests of Christian youth have for more than half a century found expression principally through the Christian youth movements, notably the World's Y.M.C.A., the World's Y.W.C.A., and the World's Student Christian Federation. Indeed, as we noted earlier, these were the first truly world-wide Christian organizations, long antedating the several ecumenical efforts of youth's seniors. Not in this way alone, but also by claiming the allegiance of the oncoming leadership of the churches, by convincing them of the practicability of Christian unity, and by introducing them into an experience of its reality, these Christian youth fellowships have pioneered the way for the more cautious and doubting advance of the churches. Spiritually, if not organizationally, they are the parents of ecumenical Christianity of today.<sup>12</sup>

With thorough consistency, the several Christian youth movements have worked in the closest co-operation. That collaboration took climactic form in the great World Conference of Christian Youth meeting in Amsterdam in July 1939, almost as the armies were mobilizing, and sponsored jointly by the three veteran organizations plus the World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches

<sup>12</sup> See above, pp. 89-91.

and the World Council's Provisional Committee. Yet the youth organizations which are directly related to certain of the churches but to none of the traditional world youth movements have had no international center of co-ordination and inspiration. This is a primary responsibility of the new Youth Department of the World Council, which will also, so far as desired, help to correlate the various world bodies working with students and other young people. Again, the first specific project in co-operation is the sponsorship of the Second World Conference of Christian Youth, planned for Oslo, Norway, July 22–August 1, 1947.

#### 6. *Commission of the Churches on International Affairs*

Concern with issues of world order must necessarily claim a large attention of any world body not exclusively preoccupied with its own interior life. Discussions of Christianity and international affairs had found an important place in every one of the sequence of both missionary and Life and Work conferences—Edinburgh 1910, Stockholm, Jerusalem, Oxford, Madras. Since its inception the Study Department of the World Council had made "The Responsibility of the Church for the International Order" a major topic of investigation. A conference of Christian leaders, mainly laymen, called by the Study Department at Geneva on the very eve of the war, in July 1939, issued a notable declaration on "The Churches and the International Situation."

But, in a world staggering to recover from two global conflicts and trembling with apprehension from the threat of a third, a larger and weightier impact by the world Church upon the relations of the nations is clearly demanded. Accordingly, a new organ of united Christendom in this field has been formed. The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs is sponsored jointly by the World

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Council and the International Missionary Council (the first concrete step in what is expected to develop as a steadily increasing co-ordination of their programs), so that world Christianity as a whole, through its two major arms, shall be fully enlisted. The Commission was set up at an international conference of Christian leaders at Cambridge, England, in August 1946, and its tasks were defined as follows:

The primary responsibility of the Commission on International Affairs shall be to serve the Churches, Councils, and Conferences which are members of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council as a source of stimulus and knowledge in their approach to international problems, as a medium of common counsel and action, and as their organ in formulating the Christian mind on world issues and in bringing that mind effectively to bear upon such issues. More particularly, it shall be the aim of the Commission:

1. *To encourage the formation, in each country and in each church represented in the parent bodies, of commissions through which the consciences of Christians may be stirred and educated as to their responsibilities in the world of nations.*

The influence of Christians upon international problems must be made effective mainly through individual governments, and, inasmuch as the relations of public opinion to official action vary, the methods of expressing this influence will vary. It must be a major purpose of the Commission to assist churches in the several lands to express their judgments on world issues to their governments.

2. *To gather and appraise materials on the relations of the churches to public affairs, including the work of various churches and church councils in these fields and to make the best of this material available to its constituent churches.*

Thus the Commission will draw spiritual sustenance from our Christian people. If the Commission is to be an effective body, there must be channels through which the hopes and fears of Christian people can flow into the Commission, and through it to Christians in other lands.

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3. To study selected problems of international justice and world order, including economic and social questions, and to make the results of such study widely known among all the churches.

Only a limited number of carefully chosen problems can be given the thorough study required. Such study should utilize the best available thought from any quarter, should seek counsel of informed experts, and should bring to bear on the problems insights derived from Christian faith.

4. To assign specific responsibilities and studies to sub-committees or special groups, and to claim for them the assistance of persons especially expert in the problems under consideration.

Much of the Commission's most important work will have to be done through groups, smaller and more readily accessible than the Commission as a whole. Special effort should be directed to assure that such sub-committees, while necessarily limited in scope of membership, shall be as fully representative as possible.

5. To organize study conferences of leaders of different churches and nations.

Through such conferences, meeting in an atmosphere of Christian fellowship, significant Christian judgments on international issues may be reached, and the work of the churches in the several nations may be guided and advanced.

6. To call the attention of the churches to problems especially claimant upon the Christian conscience at any particular time and to suggest ways in which Christians may act effectively upon these problems, in their respective countries and internationally.

7. To discover and declare Christian principles with direct relevance to the relations of nations, and to formulate the bearing of these principles upon immediate issues.

In preparing and issuing public declarations, the Commission should build upon the results of earlier work by the parent bodies in this field, such as the Stockholm, Jerusalem, Oxford and Madras Conferences. In general, the character and scope of such declarations may well follow the general lines thus established. More specifically:

a) When the World Council of Churches or the International Missionary Council as a whole is meeting, in an assembly,

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conference, or committee, the Commission might recommend statements which, if adopted, would have importance as representative of Christian opinion. (outside Roman Catholicism) all over the world.

b) Since the Councils meet infrequently, the Commission on International Affairs would, in the interim, have liberty to speak in its own name, making clear that the Councils had not endorsed the statement.

c) If occasions arise in which the officers or sub-committees of the Commission feel impelled to speak without waiting for consultation with the Commission as a whole, they should make clear that they are not committing any group other than themselves.

8. *To represent the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council in relations with international bodies such as the United Nations and related agencies.*

The Commission should maintain such contacts with these bodies as will assist in:

a) The progressive development and codification of international law.

b) The encouragement of respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, special attention being given to the problem of religious liberty.

c) The international regulation of armaments.

d) The furtherance of international economic co-operation.

e) Acceptance by all nations of the obligation to promote to the utmost the well-being of dependent peoples, including their advance toward self-government and the development of their free political institutions.

f) The promotion of international social, cultural, educational, and humanitarian enterprises.

9. *To concert from time to time with other organizations holding similar objectives in the advancement of particular ends.*<sup>13</sup>

If initial plans materialize, the Commission will function principally through two offices, in New York and London,

<sup>13</sup> *Conference of Church Leaders on International Affairs* (Cambridge, England, August 4-7, 1946), pp. 4-6.

will command a sizable budget for its program, and, in addition to its major purpose of stimulating and guiding the thought of churches in all lands on pressing issues in the international field, will represent the world Church in relation to the many new organs which have come into being conjointly with the United Nations. Thus, the churches should have a more effective instrument than ever previously to mobilize Christian insight and opinion in support of world order.

### 7. *Ecumenical Press Service*

One of the largest services rendered to all the churches by the ecumenical offices in Geneva has been the dissemination of factual information of what is taking place from week to week throughout the world Church. This has been accomplished mainly through the weekly mimeographed bulletins of the International Christian Press and Information Service. Modest in format but comprehensive in content and discriminating in selection, these bulletins have long been regarded by their readers as invaluable. It is gratifying to note their widening circulation and influence.

It is remarkable that in the war-years, precisely because of the isolation of the churches from each other, the demand for news of the ecumenical Church has become far greater. The Service reports not only that its list of subscriptions has grown by leaps and bounds but that in many countries the religious press now makes the fullest possible use of its news items.<sup>14</sup>

The Ecumenical Press Service, reorganized and renamed, is supported jointly by several of the ecumenical bodies. That support will continue, but the Service has now become a department of the World Council.

<sup>14</sup> *The World Council of Churches: Its Process of Formation*, p. 87.

### 8. *An Ecumenical journal*

At the last meeting of the Provisional Committee before war broke, decision was taken to launch a quarterly journal, probably to be entitled *Koinonia*, which should serve both to keep the churches informed of the more important developments in ecumenical Christianity and to lead their thinking on the larger issues within the world Church and in its relations to the world. This was one of the very few projects laid aside through the years of conflict. Now the proposal has been revived, its inauguration again authorized, and it is hoped that the first issue, under the editorship of W. A. Visser 't Hooft, may not be delayed beyond the autumn of 1947.

### 9. *Study Department*

One ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement is the creation of a united Christian mind, united not merely on the complex issues of the relations of the churches to the world, but sufficiently united on the churches' understanding of their own nature and authority to sustain that measure of structural unity which they may believe to represent God's purpose for the Church. This goal can be attained only as the final fruit of long and patient struggles for mutual comprehension and for divinely kindled perception. Therefore, an intermediate aim must be the stimulation and guidance of thought throughout the churches both on matters which demand an immediate united witness and on differences which impede an ultimate united life. Here responsibility falls mainly on the Study Department of the World Council, in closest collaboration with research and study activities of the other world Christian bodies.

It is a task of staggering magnitude and complexity. Unity must be sought among Christians speaking a dozen major



tongues, rooted in a score of contrasted historic cultures, confessing allegiance to a hundred different political sovereignties, divided into eight or ten great confessional groups and over two hundred lesser autonomous units which have been developing independent and often antagonistic traditions for a hundred, four hundred, and even a thousand years. To fulfill this task, the Study Department can command the services of no more than two secretaries plus voluntary participation by interested churchmen.

The principal method is a continuous interchange of thought and discussion among Christian leaders of every major tradition and in all parts of the world, through individual correspondence, small local groups, and, so far as conditions permit, occasional regional and world-wide meetings, and through publication of authoritative and arresting literature of the highest quality. Before September 1939, the Study Department had already enlisted the participation of some four hundred "collaborators" chosen from foremost Christian thinkers of all countries, had fostered a dozen or more active study groups, and had assembled several international consultations. The central theme of these discussions was "The Church: Its Nature and Function," which was broken into a number of subtopics.

One might suppose that this program, so intricate and delicate, requiring leisured reflection for its participants, and dependent upon constant world-wide contact, would have become a war casualty. Actually, though curtailed in scope and constantly harassed by difficulties of communication, study work went forward through the war years, with not a little important fruitage. From the study headquarters in Geneva and the United States, correspondence continued regularly with collaborators throughout North America, Western Europe, China, Australasia, India, Egypt, and

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also the Balkans and the Far East, until country after country was sealed from all free communication. Two centers, the Northern Ecumenical Institute at Sigtuna, Sweden, and the Chicago Ecumenical Study Group, concentrated upon basic underlying themes and produced materials of outstanding value. Two new commissions, brought into existence in the United States and Great Britain by the pressing issues of the war, gave special attention to questions of postwar order and helped to guide thought among all the churches in this sphere. Meantime, the Geneva staff directed a series of factual studies under the caption *Ecclesia Militans*, summarizing what was actually being said and done under stress of war by various churches on such matters as "Preaching in Wartime," "The Church Speaks to the World," "Renewal of Bible Study," "Rebuilding Parish Life," "Trends of Liturgical Renewal," "Rome and the Other Churches," "The Life and Work of Women in the Church," "Reform of Theological Education," "The Church and Its Youth," and so forth. Most surprising of all, through secret and hazardous channels, the more important documents and declarations originating in non-Axis countries were translated and transmitted into the Balkans and into Germany, and, *through Germany*, into lands under Axis occupation. Thus exchange of conviction on the most controversial issues continued between Christians on both sides of the conflict. We have already had occasion to note the proof of the reality and vitality of this interchange in the emergence of a far-reaching consensus on the principal issues of international order, achieved by correspondence among those severed from direct contact by the life-and-death struggle of their nations.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Analysis of the Christian Attitude to the Social and Economic Foundations of a Just and Durable Peace.*

Meanwhile, scholars especially related to problems of Faith and Order quietly continued their investigations of basic differences in Christians' views of "The Church," looking toward the day when world-wide discussion of obstacles to a united Church of Christ could be resumed.<sup>16</sup>

With war's end, the Study Department returns to its long-range tasks. The first postwar meeting of the Study Commission assembled at Cambridge, England, in August 1946. About twenty-five members were in attendance, drawn from the most influential leaders of theological thought. As discussion passed from person to person around the conference table, an almost unbelievable fact gradually made its presence inescapably clear. To the amazement of each participant, the most considered and strongly held convictions of the various members on the great issues of Christian faith and its message to today's world were discovered to run on almost precisely identical lines. Not a major divergence of a divisive kind appeared. This is the more remarkable when it is noted that the Commission included foremost spokesmen for almost every principal theological viewpoint within the World Council constituency, and that a number of those present, in the immediately pre-war ecumenical conferences, had found their minds in sharp, though friendly, opposition. Here is something new within ecumenical Christianity. And further evidence of the consensus wrought by the demands of war and its aftermath.

In due time the Study Department will seek to carry through certain of the fundamental studies outlined before

<sup>16</sup> See, especially, *The Nature of the Church* and *Report on Intercommunion*, the work of two American committees of Faith and Order; and *Rules and Customs of Churches Concerning Intercommunion and Open Communion*, compiled by Canon Leonard Hodgson, secretary of Faith and Order.

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the war. Projects developed during the war will be brought to completion. At no distant date, it is hoped to create an Ecumenical Institute of Study and Research "adequately equipped in personnel and resources to co-ordinate and guide a world-wide interchange of Christian experience, convictions, and insights." In the meantime, an especially close relation will be maintained with the new Ecumenical Training Center, and also with the research department of the International Missionary Council and other fraternal bodies.

Through the two-year period 1946-48, however, the resources and energies of the Study Department will be almost wholly pre-empted for a special task committed to it by the Provisional Committee—preparation of the churches for the first meeting of the World Council Assembly.

### 10. *The first Assembly*

The Assembly of the World Council of Churches has been called to meet in Holland from August 24 to September 5, 1948. With this first session of the Assembly, the World Council, since 1938 technically "in process of formation," will come formally into existence. This extraordinary embryo will celebrate its official birth.

The Assembly is defined by the constitution as "the principal authority" of the Council. Its primary responsibilities are legislative. It will be confronted by a vast accumulation of matters requiring discussion and decision, all the more numerous and complex because of the long deferment of the meeting, and because of the somewhat anomalous status of the Council's wartime operation. It is intended, however, that this first Assembly shall be very much more than a business session. Here, the major communions of non-Roman Christendom will come together

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for the first time in the persons of officially designated representatives. It will be their task to seek to give guidance to the churches on the central problems of our day. Accordingly, it is planned that a full half of the Assembly's time shall be given to the great issues of Christian faith and message. In order that these discussions may marshal the best wisdom and vision of all the churches, a two-year program of preparatory study is proposed to the member churches.

The main theme of the Assembly's discussions will be: "Man's Disorder and God's Design." The topic will be considered under four headings:

The Universal Church in God's Design  
God's Design and Man's Witness  
The Church and the Disorder of Society  
The Church and International Affairs

Preparation of the churches on the last topic will be the responsibility of the new Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, and will provide one of its major projects for the two-year period. The World Council's Study Commission will carry general oversight of the preparation and full responsibility for the first three topics. Overpressed as it is to discharge adequately the normal assignment of tasks outlined in the preceding pages, the World Council's meager staff must now turn much of its most creative thought and energy toward the forthcoming Assembly. The hopes of those who care deeply for the unity of Christ's Church will likewise come more and more to focus upon that event.

### iv

It was originally planned that the World Council should come formally into being through its first Assembly in the

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summer of 1941. The second World War intervened. Thus, arrangements devised for an interim period of three years have had to carry the Council through ten of the most fateful and tragic years in human history. The result must astound the most skeptical and confound the most critical. The Assembly will meet in Holland not to give birth to an infant body but rather to plan the further growth of a sizable and vigorously functioning organism, already tried and proved by fire and mighty in vitality and promise.



## Part

## IV

# WORLD CHRISTIANITY TOMORROW

WE STAND on the threshold of tomorrow. Of the character of that future we need attempt no detailed delineation. In one sense, we enter a future shrouded in well-nigh impenetrable obscurity. The president of one of our large eastern universities reports a recent conversation with a solicitous parent. Having scheduled an appointment well in advance, the lady entered, and, confronting the president, asked him solemnly, "Mr. President, how are you preparing our sons for tomorrow's world?" To which he quickly replied, "Madam, if you will tell me what tomorrow's world will be like, I can tell you how we are preparing your sons for it." No one is sufficiently wise, no one possesses a sufficiently comprehensive grasp of the infinite complex of controlling factors in their intricate interrelationships to be able to forecast with reasonable probability the contours of politi-



cal, of economic, of national, of international life fifty, thirty, ten years hence; or to prophesy the convulsions and cataclysms which these decades may bring forth.

In another sense, we know all too well the deeper characteristics of that future. They supply the background of all our thought, the undertones of all our conversation, the enfolding darkness of all our expectations. We know it will be a future scarred with measureless human suffering. We know it will be a future rifted by stress and conflict. We know it will be a future which will wrap all mankind in a single bundle of destiny. We know it will be a future in which civilization itself may repeatedly hang in the balance.

Face to face with that unforeseeable, and yet all too readily predictable, future stand Christians and their churches. What gifts for its need may world Christianity bring?

## Chapter 6

### THE IMPERATIVE TO CHRISTIAN UNITY

i

ONE need not be a devotee of dialectic in any of its orthodox schools—Platonic, Hegelian, Marxist—to recognize the omnipresence of a profound logic of oscillation within human life and human thought. It pervades every aspect of man's existence and culture, amidst every civilization and in every period of history. Manifold instances of it provided Hegel with abundant evidence for his seductive philosophy of history, however gravely he may have overlooked exceptions, neglected other and no less significant factors, or distorted his data in the service of a wooden logic.

The Christian need not look beyond the biography of his own movement for confirmation. There are some signs of such a polar dialectic within the New Testament itself. And in the Church's development, alternate stress upon freedom and authority, upon the rational and the mystical, upon tradition and novelty, upon individual and communal experience, upon faith and works, upon liturgy and unadorned devotion, furnishes a motif which weaves its way through the length of the nineteenth centuries' chronicle

and proposes an attractive principle of interpretation for the whole.

In the spiritual growth of every individual, a similar polarity has supplied Professor Hocking with an enriching suggestion—the principle of alternation between work and worship.

What is obvious in the *life* of the Christian movement has been no less evident in its *thought*. The classic illustration stands forth from the faith's most crucial period, that of the formulation of its creeds—the bitter struggle between the disciples of Athanasius and of Cyril, between Alexandria and Antioch, between proponents of the unity of the Godhead and of the distinction of its persons, between insistence respectively upon the divinity and the humanity of Christ. And the upshot of three centuries of heated controversy in two successive phases was the Catholic Church's resolute refusal to choose—its return of a firm if somewhat befuddled "both . . . and" to the disputants' insistent "either . . . or." Nicaea, Constantinople, Chalcedon are the successive landmarks on the tortuous route. *Mia ousia, treis hypostaseis—Una substantia, tres personae*—"One substance, three persons." The juxtaposed phrases reveal the method of solution. Each of the embattled contestants could accept the formula with reasonable satisfaction by the simple device of underscoring that phrase which embraced his own interest, and sliding quickly over the other phrase so crucial for his opponent. At Chalcedon a century and a half later than Nicaea the same method of solution was even more baldly employed—not "either . . . or" but "both . . . and," a solution by inclusion rather than by rejection at whatever cost to logical coherence and rationality. There the phrases stand, side by side, in all their seeming contradiction and glorious incredibility: "perfect in deity and

perfect in humanity"; "begotten before the ages of the Father, . . . in the last days born of Mary the Virgin"; and, especially, "acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, . . . not divided or separated into two persons but one and the same Son and only begotten God Logos, Lord Jesus Christ."

Our own Protestant heritage furnishes further striking illustration. The Reformation was, in no small part, a movement of reaction—righteous and necessary reaction against the worst corruptions of Roman practice. The very title—hardly the most promising name for a new and significant advance of Christian faith—discloses its mood. The nature of the struggle is even more clearly hinted in the defensive reaction it provoked—the Counter Reformation. Inevitably, the movement of recoil swung, at certain points, to a polar extreme; and thus lost something of the riches and wholeness of full Christian faith—losses which, in part, are being recovered only in our own time, though reclamation is even yet by no means complete. It is a principal asset of Rome that she has continued to hold disparate emphases within a single Church. It is a major misfortune of Protestantism that discovery or recovery of real but partial truth tends to beget new divisions.

It is important to grasp clearly the ground of this ever recurrent, though multiple and varied, logic of man's existence. Clearly, it is rooted in the profoundest reaches of human psychology. Like many another cause of both enrichment and conflict in man's experience, its sources are not one but two. It springs from human finitude; and it springs from human sin.

In part it is due to the inability of any individual, or movement, or era, to lay hold on more than a fraction of the rich,

inexhaustible reality which enfolds and conditions our life, or of the truth concerning that reality. One person or organization fastens upon a facet of the whole. And, because it is genuinely real though only partial, it seems *all*, and is so proclaimed. But another individual or group is gripped by another facet; and lifts a counterclaim. Then the struggle is on. Battle cries are raised—actually the *same* battle cry by both parties in opposed accents. “Either . . . or”—“either *this*, or nothing”; “no, *that*, and that alone.”

Just there, the second cause enters. Finitude—inevitable, blameless—nurtures *sin*. The first disputant, satisfied in his own experience of reality, can and will see nothing more; he denies his neighbor's vision. The latter, jealous of the claims of the first, discredits his authentic discovery. And, because each holds only part of the larger whole, the efforts of each at pretension and exclusion are, by a divine justice, self-defeating. The swing of the pendulum oscillates exaggeratedly to one extreme and then its opposite. And so on, endlessly.

The sources of this dialectic are, then, two—the one positive, the other negative; the one worthy, the other base. The one, a genuine discovery of truth; the other, mere narrow-visioned reaction.

I have said that this logic pervades all cultural history. It has dominated no epoch more fatally than that of which we are heirs. The modern period may go down in history as “The Age of Reaction”—not, to be sure, in the colloquial sense of return to tradition (far from it!), but in the literal meaning that its dominant impulses were very largely *revulsions from* its precursors. Consider its dominant figures in religious thought—Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Ritschl—each in violent reaction from one or more of the exaggerated features of his background—emotionalism or rationalism or

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moralism or romanticism—each begetting a theology gravely one-sided, incomplete, therefore fundamentally false. The mood of these giants, though not their dogmas, has dominated every generation since. How often we identify a view, and correctly, by explaining that “it is in reaction against such-and-such”! But there is no virtue in reaction, and no true wisdom. Thus the modern age has been permeated by an underlying impulse of “reaction,” and has been cursed by the one-sidednesses and conflicts thus bred.

We present-day Christians do well to reflect that we are children of the most “reactionary” era in mankind’s intellectual history, and that every child, more than he realizes, is infected with the parental malady.

### ii

What bearing, it may be queried, has all this upon our special interest?

The dominant currents in the life of the Church in the past half century have been centripetal. This we have repeatedly noted.

At their inception, they flowed parallel to, if they were not actually the spiritual expressions of, wider centripetal tides in the general life of culture. Here is the overarching character of the twentieth century to date. Two world wars within a single generation are at once, its outcome, its denial, and convincing proof. Indeed, as so often, the churches were, excepting certain prophetic individuals and groups, late to feel and respond to the ruling tendency of the times. While nations and societies were beginning to draw together in world-wide communication and commerce, the churches were still marked by intense inner struggles and further fissions.

But the centripetal forces in the world’s life were super-

ficial and ineffectual. Their end product is two global conflicts and humanity mortally lacerated and impotent. As I have earlier ventured to suggest, future historians may single out as one of the most significant features of this age the fact that, while the centripetal trends within Christendom originated in part from broader centripetal tendencies within the general culture, they continued with even more determined effort and significant result after the general cultural drift had suffered radical reversal and more powerful centrifugal forces than the earth had ever before witnessed were loosed upon mankind. It has been precisely while the nations have been falling apart that the leadership of the Christian churches of the world has been drawing closer and closer together. As the Madras Conference of 1938 was bold to declare: "The decade since last we met has witnessed the progressive rending of the fabric of humanity; it has witnessed an increasing unification of the body of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

We stand today close to the end of another cultural epoch, near a decisive turning point in mankind's history. Bold would be he who ventured to forecast the character of the future or to prospect its dominant winds and tides. It may be that the centripetal currents which have furnished the distinguishing character of the age which is passing, but were too weak to determine its course, may resume their flow with multiplied power, and bring into actuality that community of peoples and nations which, patently, is the true destiny of mankind in our era and its only safeguard against tragic disintegration and collapse through repeated conflict. But we should be foolish to rely on such an outcome. This much we know: there is an inexorable dialectic in human history which follows a period of centripetal

<sup>1</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, p. 16.

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achievement by the loosing of centrifugal counter forces. The happier outcome we may hope and pray for; the more somber possibility we must expect and prepare against.

Such reaction, as we have noted, always has two sources. In part, it is always the attempt to counteract an extreme movement in the first direction and to reclaim values neglected by it. In part, it is the curse of human finitude and sin.

Should such recoil set in—which God forbend!—our churches, so enmeshed in their respective nations and within their cultures, will not be immune to its sweep. Indeed, as Christian history, especially that of Protestantism, so abundantly witnesses, Christians are peculiarly susceptible to just such impulses of reaction. The weather-worn clichés will be refurbished—"unity sacrifices essence"; "we meet only on the least common denominator." Do we already hear faint murmurs that this movement of Christian unity, this ecumenical Christianity, has gone too far? The reaction would be, as always, in some part a recovery of real values in our national and denominational traditions, currently neglected or omitted; in very large part, it would be the consequence of human finitude and, above all, of human narrowness, human bigotry, human sin.

Such reaction may not materialize, either in culture or among the churches. We do not want to presume its inevitability. We do want to anticipate its possibility, and be clear of mind and purpose in preparing against such an eventuality.

That is to say, we want to take careful measure of this modern movement of Christian collaboration, its strength and weaknesses, and understand clearly Christ's imperative to Christian unity.



## iii

How shall we appraise the significance of the movement for Christian unity?

1. It is important to assess at their full strength certain very considerable limitations:

a) In the first place, ecumenical Christianity embraces only a part of the entire Christian world. From the roll of participant churches there are one mighty and several other lesser but weighty absentees. As noted earlier, almost nothing which has been said of growing co-operation involves the Church of Rome, with a membership of roughly two fifths of Christendom. So long as Rome recognizes no other body bearing the name of Christian as a true Church and maintains a convinced and studied aloofness, there is no realistic prospect of participation by that Church as a world body in ecumenical Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

Again, while many of the Greek-speaking Eastern Orthodox communions have recently affiliated with the World Council of Churches, the attitude of the Church of Russia, the largest and most influential Orthodox body, remains obscure. And, as in the political realm, Russia exerts a growing domination over lesser Eastern Churches—Rumanian, Bulgarian, Estonian, Latvian, and so forth. Here, as in the affairs of nations, many uncertainties are gathered up in one overarching question: What does Moscow intend?

b) In the second place, it must be conceded that participation in ecumenical Christianity is still largely confined to leaders of the several churches. Conviction of its importance, even awareness of its existence, has only begun to seep down into the rank-and-file membership. The great bulk of the life and work of the Church is still in and

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 39.

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through sectarian communions unaware of the larger loyalty. Not until the movement has achieved grass rootage can it be said to be a movement of the Christians of the world; only then can its future be secure. On the other hand, it is not without significance that ecumenical Christianity does today claim the convinced allegiance and wholehearted support of most of the foremost leaders of its member churches.

c) Again, ecumenical Christianity, especially in its world organs, is still at the stage of first and modest beginnings. Measured in terms of financial resources, the entire expenditure of all major American Protestant churches for their co-operative program through the Federal Council of Churches is hardly larger than the administrative expenses of one of the stronger individual denominations. The budget of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, through which some forty American communions unite for common action, or of the International Missionary Council, in which all major missionary societies of Protestantism join, is smaller than the headquarters budget of one of the larger denominational missionary boards. More striking still, the resources placed annually at the disposal of the World Council of Churches for its regular work by a hundred communions in over thirty lands are less than the expenditures of one of several congregations in New York City.

On the other hand, happily, financial strength is no measure whatever of spiritual effectiveness. Here, if anywhere, size of organization and budget are the poorest measuring rods. The guess may be hazarded—it is not subject to verification or disproof—that there is no place within the vast and intricate structure of Protestantism where each invested dollar is so economically husbanded and so produc-

tive of far-reaching spiritual results as in the meagerly furnished agencies of ecumenical Christianity.

d) Once more, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the influence of world Christianity upon the issues of public order and world peace. It cannot be too emphatically reiterated that the Christian Church is not a political instrumentality pitting its strength against secular ideologies and governments. The influence it disseminates and the manner of its working are too gentle, too subtle, to register clearly in the crude calculus of empire. Yet the churches are learning—and rapidly—that their ability to bring Christian insight and judgment to bear upon affairs of state is in direct proportion to the unity of their voice and action. It should be so. The churches cannot hope to heal the divisions of society—and they certainly will bring no significant healing or transforming power there—until they themselves are healed of the disease of disunity and parochialism within their own organism. The Church is, in principle, the expression of the spiritual reality and aspiration of the community, as the State is the expression of the community's political interests and concerns. If the community cannot show forth unity in spiritual purpose, how can it be expected to manifest political unity?

2. On the other hand, three facts about this development merit reflection:

a) First, it is something genuinely new, without precedent in the previous history of Christianity, or indeed of other social forces. As we have observed, its emergence and advance represent a direct reversal of the tendencies toward schism and division which have dominated the Christian movement throughout its first eighteen centuries.

b) Second, while the beginnings of the movement fell

during that period when the ends of the earth were becoming conscious of one another, when powerful centripetal tides in world culture were parenting all manner of international associations and organizations so that superficially similar trends within the churches might plausibly have been read as a phase of general cultural drift, such an interpretation wholly fails to account for the steadily accelerated advance of Christian co-operation in the past decade. Indeed, in the perspective of cultural history, this may be the most notable, as it is certainly the most unexpected, fact: it is precisely while the community of peoples and nations was breaking asunder that the leaders of the Christian churches of the world have been drawing closer and closer together until they are today in fact more nearly united in understanding, in mutual trust, and even in organization for common action than ever before in Christian history. What has been taking place within the churches can on no account be put down as a phase of cultural drift. Rather, it discloses deep and powerful currents pressing resolutely and successfully directly *against* the most powerfully disruptive and centrifugal tides in contemporary culture.<sup>3</sup>

c) Third, and last, ecumenical Christianity has been tested by fire, and thus far has proved strong to endure. Today this world Christian movement, youthful though it be, as yet embracing somewhat less than half of the six hundred million Christians on the earth's surface and hardly a tenth of the total population of the world, tiny in organization, modest in pretension, does in fact hold in convinced allegiance representative leaders out of every race and almost every people, and binds them in a loyalty mightier than the most powerful parochialisms of nation or class.

<sup>3</sup> See further, above, pp. 101-2.

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It is a living, growing WORLD COMMUNITY. It is the only world community our earth knows. It may furnish to the despairing peoples of mankind an earnest, and something of a foretaste, of the community of nations which some day may be.

### iv

In the light of this rough balance sheet of strengths and weaknesses, we turn to face the imperative to Christian unity.

Let us recall that the motivation impelling unity is two-fold. In part it is *defensive, practical, expediential*. In part it is *positive, theoretical, ideal*.

Unity is laid upon the churches as an inescapable obligation, because none of their greatest problems can be adequately met, none of their most clamant tasks can be effectively discharged, by individual churches or separate communions—but only by the total resources of the whole Church of Christ.

That is manifestly true of the churches' world mission. It was inescapably revealed in the discussions at Madras. The Madras Conference considered the manifold problems of the Christian world mission under sixteen headings—evangelism, relations with non-Christian faiths, spiritual life, training of the ministry, education, enlistment and preparation of missionaries, Christian literature, the Church and the economic and social orders, the Church and international problems, the Church in its relations with the State, and so on. Each topic was assigned to a special section. Each section worked independently on the subject assigned to it. In the closing hours, one section after another presented its findings, the most important directives for its area of the total task. There is a common thread which weaves its way

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through every report like an unintended but inescapable motif—the necessity of closer co-operation and unity.

We are told that the present tragic deficiencies in leadership cannot be met except through united training. It is urged that there can be no adequate program of Christian literature, so vital for advance, except through unified planning and publication. The whole vast enterprise of Christian education cries for strengthening through unification. No self-respecting response to the unfinished evangelistic task is possible except through a common plan. For the enlistment, training, and deployment of missionaries; for the economic stability of the younger churches; for effective impact upon pressing social problems; for a strategy in any way worthy of the Church's opportunity and responsibility; for an effective confrontation of governments; and for a dozen other essential purposes—for all these, immediate and radical co-ordination of Christian resources is the indispensable prerequisite.<sup>4</sup>

It is simple matter of fact that Christian missions cannot begin to meet any of the urgent practical tasks ahead except through a unified strategy and united mustering and deployment of all available resources.

It is true of the churches' impact on the world of nations. In a world crying for the healing of its divisions and breaking to pieces for lack of it, the churches of Christ have no right to rebuke the nations for their disunity, or to exert a significant influence—and they certainly will not in fact do so—so long as they perpetuate in their own beings the very infections of disorder and division which require cure.

It is not one whit less true of the churches in America. Those churches cannot bring an effective impact upon any

<sup>4</sup> *The World Mission of the Church, passim.* See, further, *For the Healing of the Nations*, pp. 131–34.

one of the great problem areas or pioneering tasks—the halting of secularism, the confrontation of government, the reclamation of education, the Roman Catholic problem, outreach and occupation, the social order—unless they act unitedly with every resource at their pooled command.

It is no less true in each local community. Whether we have in view the amelioration of social disease and disorder or the reaching of the unchurched—the most flagrantly bypassed job of the churches—to each there is only one answer: the massed Christian strength of all churches directed unitedly upon common responsibilities. Unity is, first of all, then, the clear counsel of expediency, of *practical statesmanship*.

On the other hand, unity is laid upon the churches as an inescapable obligation by the *command of Christ*. Their present state is a denial of their own faith; it is blatant disloyalty to the clear direction of him whom they acknowledge as Master. That this is discerned most clearly and poignantly by the youngest Christian churches is but further evidence of keener sensitiveness to the mind of the Master at the frontiers of the Church's life, of the priceless gifts of the world mission to the world Church.<sup>5</sup> Unity is, finally and decisively, a matter of elementary *fidelity to the churches' basic commission* from Christ and to his expectation of them.

Let us be quite clear what is the Christian unity which is required. Not, in the first instance, organic reunion of all the sects. If that be the ultimate goal, the path to it is tortuous and labored; we shall not attain the goal in our lifetimes though we may thank God for every bold advance toward it. Those who are enamoured of the far-off divine

<sup>5</sup> On the attitude of the younger churches to questions of Christian unity, see above, pp. 104-6.

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event all too readily evade the near and instant divine imperative. Not primarily organic union, but an obligation far more immediate and immediately achievable. The past century and a half have witnessed an amazing advance in Christian unity, without parallel in the previous eighteen centuries. This advance has moved through two stages—*consultation* and *co-operation*. A further step is clearly demanded of us. We long to leap the great gulf to the final consummation—*unification*. There must be other intermediary stages—one at least. Our own national history furnishes precedent. *Confederation*—the wholehearted pooling of resources, a united strategy and unified deployment of men and means, the conscription of ablest leadership out of every church for the service of all the churches, loyal enlistment in shared tasks at whatever private or organizational sacrifice; not surrender of cherished riches but subservience of particular prerogatives, in order that the Church of Christ may proclaim a single evangel, show forth a common front, advance massed strength—at every level, in each local community, in the nation, across the earth—here is Christ's imperative to his churches in this generation.

In the ancient world it was said, "All roads lead to Rome." In contemporary politics, all questions end in Moscow. In the life of the Christian churches in our age, every problem and every responsibility point to a single inexorable necessity—Christian unity.

Nothing less than the whole Church of Christ will suffice for the needs of the hour, or satisfy the churches' Lord.

### V

In the light of the imperative to Christian unity, we turn to consider two of the questions which presently embody



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the most serious obstacles to further advance. One is central for the Christian world mission—"The Authority of Christian Faith." The other is at the heart of what we have called the movement of consolidation—"The Issues of Christian Unity."

## Chapter 7

### THE AUTHORITY OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

#### i

FOR Christian faith in any age there is, in principle, one central problem. It is essentially the same in every age. It is the relation of the Christian gospel to the forms of life and thought in the environment in which Christianity is functioning. It centers in the question, How far are the forms of life and thought in that environment akin to and congruous with authentic Christian life and thought? The problem is disclosed in the extreme positions taken with regard to that question—unqualified continuity and radical discontinuity.

This is a central problem in every age. It was the crucial issue for the early Church. It forced itself upon the first Christians in two questions. On the one hand, was the new life thrust into the world at Pentecost assimilable to the prevailing life of the first century, or was it radically different, to be held apart from the environing life and shielded at all cost from dilution and contamination by it? On the other hand, was the new faith stemming from the Resurrection continuous with and the fulfillment of its Jewish precursor, or was it wholly other than that familiar religion,

springing from a radical incursion of God into history without parallel or precedent?

This was a crucial issue for Paul. The agony of his passage from conscientious Judaism to passionate Christian devotion may be interpreted, in part, as conversion from certainty of the authority of his traditional faith to acceptance of the validity of this despised heresy in all its radical novelty.

This was the crucial issue for the first Christian mission and the first Christian apologetic, moving out into the secularism and cosmopolitanism of the Greco-Roman world. What was the right adjustment of Christian behavior to the standards and practices of that world? What was the true relation of Christian belief to the presuppositions of that world's mind? The earliest structural theologies of the Church, so largely determinative upon all subsequent theology, were hammered out under insistent pressure from that question. The so-called ecumenical creeds were the most influential outcome.

This has been a central issue in each great critical or creative period since, as the mind of the Church in successive eras has confronted unfamiliar thought forms in the environing culture and has been constrained to come to terms with them, or as the life of the Christian movement has pushed forth into new lands or strange cultures and made its accommodation to them. It is a commonplace of the history of doctrine that each of the four main types of Christian theology—Eastern, Roman, Reformation, and Modern—was, at its inception, in large part a redeclaration of essential Christian faith in confrontation of a regnant philosophy in the surrounding world.

It may be recognized, I believe, that this is the really crucial point of division in most of the great issues of theo-

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logical controversy. It is the question whether continuity or radical contrast most accurately defines the relations of God and the world, of God and man; of religion and high ethics, of revealed and natural religion; of men's knowledge of God and their knowledge of nature; of Christianity and pre-Christian Judaism, of Christianity and other living religions, of Christian and secular ethics, of Christianity and the surrounding culture; of Jesus Christ and other men, of Jesus of Nazareth and the risen Christ, of the faith of Jesus and the faith of the Church, of Christ and the movement which bears his name.<sup>1</sup> That this is the crucial problem is most convincingly demonstrated in the fact that the issue comes to clearest and decisive expression, as we should expect, in the interpretation of Christ himself. Is Christ to be regarded as the greatest among the prophets, seers, saints of mankind, supreme in pre-eminence rather than in radical distinction of essential or substantial being? Or is he to be recognized as quite other than the foremost of human leaders, of a different order of personal reality than they, so that the mere suggestion of kinship, analogy, pre-eminence is utterly inappropriate and misleading? One's answer to this question springs from one's view of the continuity or discontinuity between Christ and ourselves. And that view in turn is determined by one's assumptions regarding the continuity or discontinuity between God and man. The classic Christological confessions of the creeds were colored, indeed controlled, by definite presuppositions on the latter

<sup>1</sup> To be sure, two contrasted types of continuity or discontinuity are represented in these illustrations. Some (e.g., the relation of Christianity to other religions or of Jesus Christ to other men) concern the continuity of a reality with that which is external to it. Others (e.g., the relation of Jesus of Nazareth to the risen Christ, or of Christ and the movement which bears his name) concern internal continuity or self-identity. But in every instance the issue is one of "continuity" or "discontinuity."

point, presuppositions accepted from the prevailing Hellenism of the Greco-Roman world.

I have said that this is the central problem for Christian faith, both its life and its thought. In the area of Christian *life*, it is the root of the somewhat hackneyed contrast between the "sect" and the "church" types of Christian community—those who feel constrained to dwell apart from a pagan society and those who intend to dwell within the general community, in greater or less conformity to its secular ways. In the realm of *belief*, it begets two ever-present types of Christian mind which, for lack of happier designations, we may call the "modernist" and the "traditionalist"—those who seek to demonstrate Christianity's supremacy by virtue of its continuity with, and fulfillment of, the best of secular thought, and those who discover the authority of Christian truth in its contrast to and condemnation of prevailing viewpoints. For the Christian message amongst peoples nominally Christian, it is the single issue of the relation of Christian life and thought to the culture of the time. But for the Christian *missionary* message, it is the double issue of Christianity's relation to prevailing cultures and of its relation to the historic religions amongst which it moves.

## ii

This issue was thrust afresh to the center of attention for the missionary movement at the time of the Madras Conference.

It will be recalled that the only material in the area of Christian message which had been prepared for the delegates to Madras was Hendrik Kraemer's massive work, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*. It was the major contention of Dr. Kraemer that Christian faith stands

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in absolute contrast to all non-Christian religions except Judaism and Islam. Other religions are "naturalistic" or "rationalistic" and therefore radically opposed to Christianity, which (with Judaism and Islam) is "revelational." Between naturalistic or rationalistic religions and faith in revelation there are no valid points of common reference. In underlying presuppositions they stand in radical opposition and incompatibility. No revelation of God is to be expected in the non-Christian religions. In no sense may they be regarded as preparing a way toward Christian faith, nor may the latter be thought of as completing or fulfilling their partial apprehensions of truth, since it springs from quite different foundations.

At Madras all considerations of the Christian faith and message moved against the background of the position thus set forth. Dr. Kraemer's powerful challenge, argued with unyielding insistence and great authority, was vividly fresh in the minds of all delegates. And his personal advocacy of his conviction in the section "The Faith by Which the Church Lives" assured that it should be driven home upon all with maximum effectiveness.

This proved to be the only theological issue upon which the conference did not achieve unanimity. When that was discovered to be impossible, three scholars of varying viewpoints, including Dr. Kraemer, were set apart to define as precisely as possible the area of agreement on this central issue and the points at which difference remained. Their statement, endorsed by the conference as a whole, declared:

There are many non-Christian religions that claim the allegiance of multitudes. We see and readily recognize that in them are to be found values of deep religious experience, and great moral achievements. Yet we are bold enough to call men out from them to the feet of Christ. We do so because we believe

that in Him alone is the full salvation which man needs. . . .

Everywhere and at all times [God] has been seeking to disclose Himself to men. He has not left Himself without witness in the world. Furthermore, men have been seeking Him all through the ages. Often this seeking and longing has been misdirected, but there are evidences that His yearning after His children has not been without response.

As to whether the non-Christian religions as total systems of thought and life may be regarded as in some sense or to some degree manifesting God's revelation Christians are not agreed. This is a matter urgently demanding thought and united study.<sup>2</sup>

It will be recognized that the area of agreement here is very broad, embracing a grateful recognition of spiritual worth in non-Christian faiths, of God's intention of self-disclosure to all men, and of evidences of true response among non-Christians. On only one point was agreement not complete. It is very precisely located: as to whether non-Christian religions as such can be regarded as showing forth divine revelation.

### iii

The process of further thought and united study on this point which was held to be imperative was initiated by the conference itself through the decision to publish a volume on *The Authority of the Faith*, in which the debate might be continued with fuller and more leisured exposition of the principal viewpoints than had hitherto been attempted. Dr. Kraemer was invited to contribute the introductory essay. Bemoaning the fact that "the amount of agreement and mutual understanding in regard to this problem, reached in Tambaram [Madras] has been so appallingly small," he declared his main thesis in even sharper affirmation under the title "Continuity or Discontinuity":

<sup>2</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, pp. 43-44.

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The Christian revelation as the record of God's self-disclosing revelation in Jesus Christ, is absolutely *sui generis*. . . .

The relation of the world of spiritual realities, spread out before us in biblical realism, toward the world which is manifested in the whole range of religious experience and striving is not that of continuity, but of discontinuity. . . .

The various religions of mankind [forbid] us to construe a relation of preparation and fulfillment between these religions and Christian revelation.<sup>3</sup>

In subsequent essays seven Christians from almost as many lands and from both older and younger churches who had shared in the Madras discussions with Dr. Kraemer set forth their answers to the same question. Of special interest is the chapter by Karl Ludvig Reichelt, founder and director of the famous Buddhist-Christian Institute near Hong Kong, where Buddhists may come to study Christianity and where the attempt is made to guide their thought from the highest apprehension of truth in Buddhist faith to its true fulfillment within Christianity. In this enterprise major reliance is placed upon the Christian conception of Logos, especially as it was developed and employed by the Alexandrian theologians. But to Dr. Kraemer, the School of Alexandria is almost the theological anti-Christ. Of Origen he had said: "He . . . succeeded better in obscuring the true character and the cardinal content of the Christian revelation than in elucidating it. . . . Emotionally he was a Christian, intellectually he was more than half a pagan." <sup>4</sup> Thus, in these two essays in the Madras volume the issue is sharply drawn. All the contributors to the volume testify to their high regard for Dr. Kraemer and their personal indebtedness to his provocative polemic. In varying degrees they declare their agreement with one or an-

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 1, 2, 5.

<sup>4</sup> *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, p. 327.



other of his arguments. But, with a single exception, they find themselves unable to take up a position with him on the issue which for him is central. This would seem to be a fairly accurate reflection of the mind of the world Church in this matter. Indeed, the volume *The Authority of the Faith* is as useful an introduction to the shadings of opinion in contemporary Christian thought on this decisive problem as is available.

## iv

Dr. Kraemer's work was provoked by, and was written in direct refutation of, the thought of Professor W. E. Hocking of Harvard. In the World Missionary Conference at Jerusalem in 1928 the latter's view had furnished a focus for controversy somewhat as did Dr. Kraemer's at Madras ten years later. In the intervening decade the Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry had issued *Re-Thinking Missions*, the theological chapters of which are almost altogether the handiwork of Dr. Hocking and which faithfully present his interpretation of the relation of Christianity to other religions and to secular culture. Most of the discussion between Jerusalem and Madras moved in an orbit marked by the Laymen's Report and its critics. The demon which Dr. Kraemer was especially resolved to exorcise was precisely the philosophy of *Re-Thinking Missions*. As it turned out, this was not a live issue at Madras; whatever debt the missionary movement might confess to the prodigious labors of the Laymen's Inquiry, the theological position of its Report had made almost no appreciable imprint upon missionary philosophy.

Much the most important discussion of our central issue since the publication of the Madras volume is to be found in Dr. Hocking's Hibbert Lectures, *Living Religions and a*

*World Faith*. Here the position which had been compressed into the opening chapters of *Re-Thinking Missions* is developed with large amplitude, more careful definition and qualification, and generous recognition of elements of truth in the condemnation which the earlier exposition had brought upon its author. There are important modifications in detail, though few in underlying premises. Here Professor Hocking is mainly concerned with the working relations between existing religions in their efforts to supply the world's need for a world faith. Three alternative principles of relationship are suggested. "The Way of Radical Displacement"—the only solution which Dr. Kraemer could entertain—is summarily rejected as unsound in theory and unchristian in spirit. But "The Way of Synthesis," which many had mistakenly supposed to be Dr. Hocking's own view, is also found to be inadequate since it tends to manifest the familiar artificialities of syncretism. Dr. Hocking proposes as the true solution "The Way of Reconception." It is his conviction that by uniting the essence of two religions where they overlap, a stance is secured from which advance may be pressed to a still higher vantage point which will embrace all that is valid in both, and much more besides. The publication of Professor Hocking's book came at a moment when world communication was disrupted, men's minds were preoccupied with immediate and practical matters, and an undeclared moratorium had brought theological controversy to temporary silence. It is too early to estimate its final influence. But one may express a doubt as to whether this new statement of Dr. Hocking's position will be markedly more successful than the earlier version in winning the Christian world movement to acceptance of its basic premises.

## V

In the eight years since Madras, the discussion provoked by Dr. Kraemer's great work and further stimulated by Dr. Hocking's restatement has been continued, mainly through occasional articles in the *International Review of Missions*, *Christendom*, and other journals. Examination of this literature reveals no notable fresh light on the central issue or the achievement of a fuller consensus of Christian judgment.

The two most recent books dealing with the missionary message, one by a veteran American professor of missions and the other by an Anglican of the younger generation writing from the heart of China, appear to reflect faithfully the predominant view. Edmund D. Soper defines the position he is concerned to advocate as "uniqueness together with continuity."

The uniqueness of Christianity is to be found in Jesus Christ. . . . This does not imply that God has not made himself known in other ways and in other religions. It does mean, however, that in Jesus Christ there is a quality of revelation which is so different that no other can compare with it.<sup>5</sup>

Canon Geoffrey Allen discovers his mind tracing a course the reverse of that habitual with liberal missionary apologetic, from catholic recognition of general revelation to climactic appreciation of Christian revelation.

If we start where Dr. Kraemer starts, we may then find that we have to broaden somewhat his position, so that we end where Dr. Reichelt ends. . . . Starting with the most rigid acceptance of Biblical realism, we shall, however, then find that the Bible itself leads us out beyond its own pages; from the Bible itself we learn a broad view of the reign of God, and of

<sup>5</sup> *The Philosophy of the Christian World Mission*, p. 227.

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His self-revelation, elsewhere in the world. . . . If we are true to the Biblical revelation . . . we shall discern the presence of God in self-revelation throughout the history of all nations, in the one world that was created by Him.<sup>6</sup>

Each of these statements in its own way confirms the major findings of Madras. Indeed, that this is the prevailing outlook within the missionary movement as a whole was strikingly demonstrated in the Madras discussions themselves. Heretofore, world Christian gatherings had drawn membership principally from Europe and America, and their thought was oriented to the Atlantic basin. As we noted earlier, it was a commonplace among those familiar with ecumenical Christian discussion that theological conviction at such meetings tended to range along a broad front with Continental traditionalism at one end, American liberalism at the opposite extreme, and British thinkers somewhere near the center, holding the determinative balance of influence and mediating between the embattled Continental and American viewpoints. So-called "liberal theology" was identified by theologians from the old churches of Europe, and dismissed, as "Americanism." At Madras for the first time, the mind of the whole Christian movement in its new world-wide scope was represented. Voices from the younger churches spoke in equal numbers if not with equal assurance alongside western Christians. In such a world setting, a new theological orientation disclosed itself. The proponents of traditional theology formed a very small and rather extreme right wing. Americans found themselves much closer to the center than in any previous ecumenical meeting. Those who professed what may be called a theology of "liberal evangelicalism" constituted the great bulk of the leadership of the world Church. The meaning of this

<sup>6</sup> *The Theology of Missions*, pp. 45-47.

fact is clear. The younger Christian churches have grown up largely under the tutelage of missionaries from Britain and North America. Their minds have been schooled in an interpretation of Christian faith more akin to "liberalism" than to "orthodoxy" or "neo-orthodoxy." While they are not unaffected by the forces which latterly have brought liberal theology under such severe criticism, and even into disrepute, in the West, it is clear that the current reaction toward traditionalism has, on the whole, failed to impress them and claim their allegiance. The theology of the world Christian mission is prevailingly that of liberal evangelicalism. What this may portend for the future remains as yet a matter of prophecy. But its significance should not be overlooked.

Professor Walter M. Horton entitled his essay in the Madras volume on *The Authority of the Faith* "Between Hocking and Kraemer." In it he traced the pilgrimage of his own mind from the Jerusalem Conference, where Dr. Hocking's influence was in the ascendancy, to the Madras Conference, where Dr. Kraemer's challenge was dominant. His title accurately locates the center of missionary conviction on the crucial issue for its message—somewhere "between Hocking and Kraemer."

## vi

The most painstaking and constructive effort to bridge the chasm between the two extremes of interpretation and to bring them, if not to agreement, at least to mutual understanding and appreciation, has been put forward by Professor Herbert H. Farmer of Cambridge. No one is better equipped, by temperament, by learning, and by sympathy, for this difficult task of reconciliation. Contrasting the two approaches, he writes:

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This theological viewpoint [Dr. Kraemer's] . . . appears to be that the primal, basic relationship in which God stands to man is one of absolute, sovereign will; in accordance with this the primal, basic relationship in which man is called to stand to God is conceived to be a relationship of complete and unqualified submission and obedience. Or, to put it relatively, in terms of what I suspect is the underlying theology of the opposed position, the primal relationship is not thought of as fatherly love. Of course, love is predicated by God, but the idea of love . . . is almost wholly submerged in the idea of sovereignty. . . . It is much easier for those who set the primal emphasis on sovereignty to view the religious life of mankind on the one hand and God on the other as standing over against one another in a kind of isolation, than it is for those who set the primal emphasis on fatherly love. And this is the more so when to the original doctrine of God as sovereign will there is added the derivative doctrine of sin as rank disobedience and rebellion. Sovereign will standing over against the will of man is not . . . such a holding, binding, cleaving, seeking, yearning relationship as the love of a Father which cannot and will not let men go. . . . The approach from the angle of God's absolute sovereign will results in what seems, to the view which approaches it more from the angle of His fatherly love, a curiously grudging and negative description of God's relation to men in their religious life, even when this is at its highest and best. . . . Or again, man's seeking the help of God in prayer and sacrifice for his own human ends—all that side of religion which in its perversion becomes grossly eudaemonistic and egocentric—is too easily set on one side without any consideration of the possibility, which indeed to those who start from the other angle seems to be an almost self-evident necessity, that God should be interested in the ordinary everyday needs of His children in relation to the difficult and dangerous world into which He has put them, and should desire and delight in their seeking of His co-operation and help.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "The Authority of the Faith," *The Authority of the Faith*, pp. 159-61.

We may conclude this consideration with certain general observations on the issue as formulated at the outset. I have said that the basic issue for Christian faith in every age is the relation of that faith to the world in which it finds itself. And that adjustment must be affected with respect to both belief and life. Three considerations should be borne in mind by those who would deal soundly and helpfully with this matter:

1. Both *life* and *thought* must find their relation to their environment. But it should be carefully noted that the adjustment of thought and life is not necessarily the same. Each of us, consciously or unthinkingly, is in some measure "modernist," in some measure "traditionalist"; but we may be predominantly one in life and the other in thought. I recall the impression made by one of the most unyielding champions of theological orthodoxy when he came to take the Sunday chapel service at my own university. At two minutes before eleven he swept up in his pretentious limousine; was armed out by a liveried chauffeur; donned a gown which failed pitifully to hide white flannel trousers, blue coat, and gay tie; rushed into the pulpit; and preached. Two minutes after the benediction he was off in his limousine and soon was cruising the coast of Maine in his private yacht with a party of wealthy friends. Probably not a person recalls the matter of his sermon; almost certainly it was a highly orthodox disquisition on the Atonement or the Virgin Birth. Few will forget the preacher. It is the providence of God that what we are speaks so loud that men cannot hear what we say. And the champion of theological traditionalism was, in his Christian life, an unqualified and unconverted modernist.

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By the same token, the answer the Church has given on the issue of continuity or discontinuity has not always been the same with regard to its life and its thought. Of the conviction of the early Church about its *life* there is no question: it was to keep itself uncontaminated by the world. But a dominant interpretation of the early message held that Christian *belief* was the lineal continuant and fulfillment of authentic Judaism.<sup>8</sup> In striking contrast, the Church of the fourth century, which was preparing to bind creedal uniformity upon the minds of its adherents at the behest of Constantine and with some assistance from Rome's strong arm, was, almost in the same act, accommodating its own structure and life increasingly to Rome's pagan government and culture. In the centuries since, Christians most insistent on the loftiest interpretation of Christ's person have often appeared most deaf to the clear word of his direction for their life and the life of their churches.

2. Every reformulation of Christian faith, however conscientious its resolve to lay hold only of what is essential and unchanging, is inevitably swayed, colored, and in some degree distorted by insistent pressures from its immediate intellectual environment. Trends in that surrounding culture lurch by an irregular dialectic from extreme to extreme; developments within Christian thought sway uncertainly in the wake of that dialectic, like the tail of a kite, the extreme oscillations moderated but never fully corrected by the weight of "Christian tradition." Each pressure from current thought serves Christian apologetic as both corrective and corrosive. It discloses one-sidedness and incompleteness in the prevailing Christian interpretation which it challenges; and it lures to one-sidedness and incomplete-

<sup>8</sup> See Heb. 1:1.



ness the new Christian interpretation which it demands. From the point of view of ecumenical theology, this recognition brings three warnings:

a) It should warn Christian faith in our day against a too ready welcoming of the dominant interests and categories of current thought, even though they bring sound criticism and important corrective to the inadequacies of recent theology.

b) None of the great historic theologies of the Church, even that of the so-called ecumenical councils, can furnish the structure for a sound and enduring theology for world Christendom. For each of the great systems of Christian theology—Eastern, Roman (whether Augustinian or Thomistic), Reformation, Modern—was wrought out to meet the peculiar problems of a particular crisis in the life of the Church, and in the vocabulary and assumptions of that time. Each was, in considerable measure, “modernism” to its day as it sought to make its faith intelligible to the then contemporary mind. Each bears unmistakably on its face the marks of the secular assumptions of the age of its birth. Each harbors within its bosom, in varying degree, the substance of that age’s life—its paganism and its sin as well as its insight and power. Each was, to its own time, modernism; and, like every modernism, each has become with the passage of time revered traditionalism. But no modernism can furnish essential Christianity; nor can a modernism grown hoary with antiquity; but only that which is, in reality, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Here is set the problem for the norm of essential Christian faith.

c) The quest for an ecumenical Christian theology must guard itself not only against perversion by currently prevailing interests and assumptions but also against its own inveterate tendency to distort truth by exaggerated over-

statements of its faith. For example, it is the impulse of piety to magnify the divine Sovereignty and abase human pretension at whatever defiance to logical consistency and the assumptions of actual practice. But it is the duty of theology to discover and declare, with such accuracy as it may achieve, the exact truth of God's way with men. Exaggerated overstatements of truth unfailingly provoke equally exaggerated understatements as their rejoinders. They also tend to produce in those who declare them the falsification of truth which they so devoutly profess. Augustinian insistence upon human depravity not only breeds Pelagianism—and vice versa. It may actually tend to induce depravity in those who stress depravity. In the ecumenical enterprise particularly, it is the more difficult discovery of the precise truth of God which must be sought.

3. A distinction may be recognized between Christian faith as phrased for purposes of evangelistic message and Christian faith as formulated in comprehensive theology. The two must not be contradictory or inconsistent. But the former can never embrace more than a fraction of the latter—a fraction chosen for a specific immediate purpose, that of convincing and converting one who stands outside the great, rich reality of Christian faith in all its depth and fullness.

It is customary today to stress the fact that the first message of Christianity was a very simple one, that it was almost exclusively a declaration of facts about Jesus, that it contained no references to his teaching, that it centered in the resurrection of Christ, that it demanded repentance and radical break with the past.<sup>9</sup> This is true of the public proclamation of the faith. It was framed for preaching pur-

<sup>9</sup> See Acts 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; I Cor. 15:1 ff.; Rom. 1:1-4; Gal., *passim*; etc.

poses. It aimed not to instruct but to convert. The street-corner preacher, in the first century as in the twentieth, is granted no opportunity to give his whole message. Intuitively he thrusts forth a few central points, the most striking and arresting, best suited to convict and convince. But if the listeners yielded to this strange yet strangely moving persuasion, they were introduced into the intimate fellowship of the early Christians. Twice daily they worshiped together. Nightly, as they ate supper, they reclaimed Jesus in vivid memory. There a very different evangel was being meditated, passed from mouth to mouth, and recorded for those who should come later, an evangel of reminiscence—of Peter and Zaccheus and Mary Magdalene, of a good Samaritan and a dissolute son and a grasping debtor, of profound truth made clear and convincing in lilies and ravens and sheep, of the words and deeds and thoughts of the Person in whom their new faith centered. Thus, in the conversation and instruction of the fellowship, the new converts gradually came to know who it was “in whom they believed.” In the preaching message to which they first responded, it was the radical contrast between the risen Lord and themselves, the sharp discontinuity between this new faith and their old religion, which was stressed. But in the fuller disclosure of the faith, the Lord was made known as one who had hungered and wept and suffered temptation, disappointment, and disgrace as one of their humanity. And their new faith was recognized as continuous with, while at the same time in contrast to, pre-Christian Judaism.

The distinction between the “faith for preaching purposes” and the “faith in its theological fullness” is paralleled subjectively in the contrast between the impression that faith makes upon the consciousness of the hearer and the true facts in his case. God-in-Christ comes to everyone—

Muslim and Jew and conventional church Christian hardly less than Hindu or Buddhist or bushman—as a Reality utterly different from any previously known, shattering his comfortable complacencies and assurances and presuppositions. It is the contrast between Christian faith and his former religion which strikes him. So he rightly reports his experience, for the points of contact and similarity are completely overshadowed by the radical newness and differences. But fidelity to objective truth requires us to recognize that the contrast is neither so drastic nor so absolute, the anticipation of Christ not so inconsequential or even nonexistent, as the new believer testifies. Similarly in the relation of non-Christian religions to Christian faith. Chesterton says somewhere that the only important thing about knowing the truth is to know the really important truth. In winning men to true discipleship to Christ, the most important truth is the revolution demanded in all their earlier loyalties and assumptions. But, in the attempt to report God's good gift to mankind *in its fullness*, it is the whole truth which is important; and that embraces recognition of God's partial disclosures of himself to all peoples in all time.

## Chapter 8

### THE ISSUES OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

THREE decades of ecumenical study have achieved notable advance in clarifying the issues of Christian unity. Profitable discussion must build upon these results. The primary purpose of this chapter is to summarize the present situation under four headings: (i) analysis of the problem; (ii) agreements achieved; (iii) the major issues; (iv) concluding reflections.

#### i

The nature of the unity we should seek is plainly fundamental for the whole unity movement. All Christians agree that "God wills Unity"—in some sense of the word. Every society laying claim to the name "Church" holds that the Church is by nature a unity—in some sense of the word. But disunity reveals itself when each seeks to unfold the sense of the word.<sup>1</sup>

1. An initial distinction is recognized by all—that between *Christian unity* and *church union*.

*Christian Unity* refers to the broad community of thought and feeling and ethical ideals, common to professing Christians throughout the world, on the basis of which individuals coming

<sup>1</sup> Angus Dun, *The Meaning of Unity* (Report No. I of Commission IV in preparation for the Edinburgh 1937 Conference), p. vii.

out of widely separated Churches can have fellowship with one another. . . . [*Church union* designates] all the forms of unity that involve the Church or Churches in their character as visible, recognizable institutions.<sup>2</sup>

The first issue concerns the extent, if any, to which the realization of Christian unity as God intends it requires the achievement of *church union*—that is, whether the ideal of Christian unity may be fulfilled merely through the fellowship of individual Christians, or whether it requires new relationships between the organized churches.

If some degree of *church union* is held to be implicit in the ideal which God wills, should the relation of churches to one another take the form of: <sup>3</sup>

- a) Informal fellowship.
- b) Mutual recognition, involving:
  - 1) Interchange of membership.
  - 2) Interchange of ministries.
  - 3) Intercommunion.
- c) Co-operative action, including federation.
- d) Corporate union (organic union).

2. In the second place, it is important to hold clearly in mind the major variant meanings for which the single English word “church” is employed. These are principally six: <sup>4</sup>

- a) A congregation of believers in Christ in a local community.
- b) An organized communion composed of local parishes which hold a common doctrine and polity.
- c) The total of all such bodies, congregations and com-

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17–44. See also *Faith and Order*, Edinburgh 1937, pp. 250 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Here we follow, in the main, the classification and terminology of the American Theological Committee of Faith and Order, *The Nature of the Church*, pp. 7–8.

munities, within a particular area, whether local, national, or world wide—the Church Militant.

d) *The “true disciples” among the organized congregations and communions*—the Invisible Church, the Body of Christ.

e) *The faithful Christians of the centuries*—the Church Triumphant, the Communion of Saints.

f) *The people of God in all ages, within and beyond Christianity*—the Family of God.

Clear thinking about “the Church” would be greatly furthered if a uniform nomenclature to distinguish these different meanings could be agreed upon—congregation, communion, Church Militant, Invisible Church, Church Triumphant, Family of God—and if, so far as the word “church” is employed to designate them all, some simple typographical device could be adopted to symbolize the differentiations—church, Church, CHURCH, Church, CHURCH, CHURCH OF GOD. Failing that, we should be careful to register the distinctions firmly in all thought and discussion of “the Church.”

Christians of extreme “congregational” affinity recognize only a, d, and e as properly entitled to the designation “church.” “We hold that a church is a local community of those who have consciously committed themselves to Jesus Christ. The only Church Universal is, in our belief, spiritual fellowship of individual souls with God.”<sup>5</sup>

Problems of church union concern a, b, and c. Problems of Christianity in its relations with other faiths center in the relation between f and all other meanings of “the Church.”

3. It is widely assumed that only differences of essential belief hold Christians apart. Actually, differences which

<sup>5</sup> Northern Baptist Convention, Denver, May 1919. Minutes, p. 229.

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may be designated "cultural" (due either to divergent historic traditions or to contrasted social outlooks) and those which may be called "temperamental" (*traditionalist* versus *modernist* outlooks) may be far deeper and more divisive. Yet these differences are found *within* every principal organization of Christians—congregations, communions, Churches Militant. Here often are the most obdurate barriers to genuine *Christian unity*. Yet they hold small place in most discussions of *church union*. Thus is suggested the limited reality of the recognized obstacles to *church union*.<sup>6</sup>

4. The condition or conditions for realizing unity are held, by different Christians, to lie in one or more of the following areas:<sup>7</sup>

a) *Faith*—the achievement of a common statement of essential beliefs.

b) *Worship*—a common rationale and practice of worship.

c) *Sacraments*—a uniform theory and administration of sacraments.

d) *Polity*—a single view, if not identical structure, of church government.

e) *Orders*—agreement regarding the form and authority of the ministry.

### ii

Advance toward Christian unity during the past century and a half has been both *practical* and *theoretical*, both in the actual realization of a larger Christian fellowship, co-

<sup>6</sup> See "The Outlook for Church Union," *What Is the Church Doing?* pp. 163-65.

<sup>7</sup> On this whole matter, see Dun, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-16; *Faith and Order*, Edinburgh 1937, pp. 253-59.



operation, and unification, and in the definition, clarification, and resolution of "convictional" obstacles to further and fuller union.

The record of *practical achievement* has been summarized above.<sup>8</sup> Progress in *theoretical clarification* and agreement has been achieved mainly in the series of recent ecumenical conferences and in the studies pursued in connection with them. The present measure of consensus and dissensus is revealed most clearly and authoritatively in the discussions of the Faith and Order Movement at Lausanne and Edinburgh, and in the response of the constituent churches to the declarations of these conferences.<sup>9</sup> We have observed that decisive obstacles to Christian unity are held by different Christians to lie in one or more of the following areas: (1) faith, (2) worship, (3) sacraments, (4) polity, (5) orders. Note that differences in the interpretation of Christian faith for the life of individuals and communities (the vast realm of Christian ethics) are not recognized as significant barriers to Christian unity, despite the wide chasms which they do in fact set up between Christians; like the differences which we earlier denominated "cultural" and "temperamental," these are found *within* every principal organization of Christians—congregations, communions, Churches Militant.

Let us examine the five areas of difficulty in turn:

1. *Faith*. This embraces everything which Christians affirm concerning God, the world, man, Christ, salvation, the future—in brief, the whole of Christian doctrine except

<sup>8</sup> Chapters 3 and 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Faith and Order, Lausanne 1927; Convictions: A Selection from the Responses of the Churches to the Report of the Lausanne Conference; Dun, op. cit.; Faith and Order, Edinburgh 1937; Statements Received from the Churches on the Report of the Edinburgh Conference, First and Second Series.*

the doctrine of the Church. In these matters, the Lausanne Conference of 1927 achieved unanimous agreement in a declaration on "The Church's Message to the World—the Gospel." At the Jerusalem Missionary Conference the following year this declaration, somewhat amplified, was re-affirmed. At Edinburgh in 1937 all questions of basic theological belief were brought together under the single caption "The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ." Again, unanimity was achieved: "We agree on the following statement and recognise that *there is in connection with this subject no ground for maintaining division between Churches.*"<sup>10</sup> This declaration has been universally hailed as an achievement of the highest significance. At the Madras Missionary Conference the following year, a statement on "The Faith by Which the Church Lives" again received unanimous assent.

2. *Worship.* Here the chief distinction is between churches whose worship is *liturgical* and those which are *nonliturgical*. Despite the wide contrasts in tradition and practice, these differences are not regarded as major obstacles to Church union: "In the non-sacramental worship of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are agreed that there is little remaining occasion for maintaining the existing divisions between our Churches."<sup>11</sup>

3. *Sacraments.* Here, the principal differences of conviction concern:

a) The number of the sacraments—whether (1) seven, or (2) two, or (3) none. The three alternative views are held mainly by (1) the Orthodox churches, (2) the Protestant churches, (3) the Friends and the Salvation Army, with the Anglican Church holding an ambiguous view. But

<sup>10</sup> *Faith and Order*, Edinburgh 1937, p. 224.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

the Edinburgh Conference declared: "Most of us agree that the question of the number of the sacraments should not be regarded as an insurmountable dividing line when we strive to attain a united Church."<sup>12</sup>

b) "Whether and in what way [the sacraments] are to be deemed necessary to salvation." Edinburgh holds that "some further mutual understanding and agreement on those points is required as a condition of full union."<sup>13</sup>

c) Whether administration by a validly ordained presbyter or bishop is necessary to the validity of a sacrament, that is, where the doctrine of the sacraments is conditioned by the doctrine of orders (5, below).

But Edinburgh also declared: "Among or within the Churches represented by us there is a certain difference of emphasis placed upon the Word and the sacraments, but we agree that such a difference need not be a barrier to union."<sup>14</sup> In other words, the only divergences in interpretation of sacraments which are regarded as presently insuperable obstacles to unity concern orders rather than sacraments.

4. *Polity*. Here the base line of all present discussion is the suggestion commended by the Lausanne Conference for study by the churches, and twice repeated at Edinburgh. This is the most fundamental and far-reaching concrete proposal which has emerged from three decades of intensive ecumenical study:

In view of (1) the place which the episcopate, the council of presbyters, and the congregation of the faithful, respectively had in the constitution of the early Church, and (2) the fact that episcopal, presbyteral and congregational systems of government are each to-day, and have been for centuries, accepted

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

by great communions in Christendom, and (3) the fact that episcopal, presbyteral and congregational systems are each believed by many to be essential to the good order of the Church, we therefore recognise that these several elements must all, under conditions which require further study, have an appropriate place in the order of life of a reunited Church, and that each separate communion, recalling the abundant blessing of God vouchsafed to its ministry in the past, should gladly bring to the common life of the united Church its own spiritual treasures.<sup>15</sup>

This formula has been embodied in detailed specifications in the scheme for union of the churches in South India; the general recognition that episcopal, presbyteral, and congregational elements "must all . . . have an appropriate place in the order of life of a reunited Church" is amplified to imply that

the episcopate, the presbyterate, and the congregation of the faithful should all in their several spheres have responsibility and exercise authority in the life and work of the Church, in its governance and administration, in its evangelistic and pastoral work, in its discipline, and in its worship.<sup>16</sup>

This is the "principle of comprehension" in its fullest possible expression. Note that the Lausanne-Edinburgh formula, while it treats of the broader issues of church polity, is primarily concerned with the place and authority of different types of *ministries*. Thus in the matter of polity, as of the sacraments, the crucial issue lies in the doctrine of orders. On the wider questions of polity, Dun is probably right: "Whatever have been their past views, it does not appear that many of the Churches represented in the Faith

<sup>15</sup> *Faith and Order*, Lausanne 1927, p. 469; *Faith and Order*, Edinburgh 1937, p. 257.

<sup>16</sup> *Proposed Scheme of Church Union in South India* (7th ed. rev., 1942), pp. 7-8, 29-30.

and Order Conference hold that a particular form of church government is necessary to the being of the Church.”<sup>17</sup>

5. *Orders.* Here, at last, we reach the single issue on which divergences are held to be so vital that churchmen cannot contemplate reunion of Christ’s Body until agreement shall have been reached—the nature and authority of the Christian ministry. More particularly, it is the issue of the *character* of apostolic succession.<sup>18</sup>

### iii

From the foregoing analyses, the major issues for Christian unity appear with some clarity:

1. The nature of the unity to be sought as ideal. As already noted, all agree that “God wills unity—in some sense of the word,” and that “the Church is by nature a unity—in some sense of the word.” Furthermore, that divergence is as to whether normative Christian unity may be realized merely through fellowship among Christians or whether it requires new relationships between organized churches and communions. (i, 1, a or c and d, above.) In principle, Baptists have maintained the first alternative most strenuously.<sup>19</sup> However, so far as I am aware, the Southern Baptists of the United States are the only major communion of Christendom which does not now admit the obligation to achieve some larger measure of organizational unity between communions in fulfillment of Christ’s command. The acceptance of membership in the World Council of Churches, not to speak of membership in numerous national councils of churches, by most of the other principal

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> *Faith and Order*, Edinburgh 1937, pp. 245–48.

<sup>19</sup> See declaration of Northern Baptist Convention, 1919, quoted p. 210.

Baptist bodies—Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, National Baptist Convention, Northern Baptist Convention, and Seventh Day Baptist General Conference in the United States—underscores the isolation of American Southern Baptists in this regard. Moreover, the response to the Edinburgh Report by the Baptist World Congress at Atlanta in July 1939 voices this injunction to all its constituents: "Baptists ought fully and frankly to search our ideas and consciences to make sure that Christian unity is not a mere abstract ideal by which we evade all responsibility for expressing an actual unity of spirit in some forms of concrete fellowship."<sup>20</sup>

In summary, among virtually the whole of Christendom the divergence of view concerning the nature of unity is as to whether the ideal is "co-operative action, including federation" (i, l, c, above) or "corporate union" (i, l, d).

A number of other matters on which the Edinburgh Conference noted differences of viewpoint or of emphasis, but no one of which is recognized as a serious barrier to Christian unity, may be quickly listed:

2. The exclusive authority of Christian revelation. Here the Edinburgh Report gives a clear statement of both agreement and disagreement:

We are at one in asserting the uniqueness and supremacy of the revelation given in Christ, in whose Name alone salvation is offered to the world. But when we turn from this to the question whether we can come to know God through other and partial revelations we find differences which demand further study and discussion. None of us holds that there is a revelation outside Christ which can be put on the same level as the revelation in Christ. But while some are prepared to recognize a

<sup>20</sup> *Statements Received from Churches on the Report of the Edinburgh Conference, Second Series*, p. 23.

*praeparatio evangelica* not only in Hebrew but also in other religions, and believe that God makes Himself known in nature and in history, others hold that the only revelation which the Church can know and to which it should witness is the revelation in Jesus Christ, as contained in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>21</sup>

This issue is of special importance for the missionary message of the churches. It received fullest exploration and formulation at the Madras World Missionary Conference of 1938, in the statement quoted earlier:

There are many non-Christian religions that claim the allegiance of multitudes. We see and readily recognize that in them are to be found values of deep religious experience, and great moral achievements. Yet we are bold enough to call men out from them to the feet of Christ. . . .

Our knowledge of God through Christ as Holy and Compassionate Love going forth impartially to all His erring children leads us to expect that everywhere and at all times He has been seeking to disclose Himself to men. He has not left Himself without witness in the world. Furthermore, men have been seeking Him all through the ages. Often this seeking and longing has been misdirected, but there are evidences that His yearning after His children has not been without response.

As to whether the non-Christian religions as total systems of thought and life may be regarded as in some sense or to some degree manifesting God's revelation Christians are not agreed.<sup>22</sup>

But this is not a difference of judgment between churches; it is found *within* most of the communions.

When we turn to the nature of the Church and its relation to the Kingdom of God and to the Communion of Saints, a whole nest of divergences appear, some recognized as merely differences of emphasis, others as differences of

<sup>21</sup> *Faith and Order*, Edinburgh 1937, pp. 228-29.

<sup>22</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, pp. 43-44.

conviction of greater or less importance and of unequal weight as obstacles to Christian unity:

3. Whether Christ is present to the Christian mainly (a) through the ministry and sacraments, or (b) through his Word truly preached and received by faith in the Church, or (c) through the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit, or (d) through all of these.<sup>23</sup>

4. Whether the relation of the Church and the Kingdom of God should be interpreted as one (a) of kinship or (b) of contrast.<sup>24</sup>

5. Whether the Church and the Communion of Saints are (a) identical, or (b) distinguishable.<sup>25</sup>

6. Whether the term "church" should be applied to (a) both the visible and the invisible redeemed community, or (b) the visible community only.<sup>26</sup>

7. Whether (a) "the progress of the Kingdom [of God] can already be seen in this world," or (b) "the Church knows the Kingdom by faith only."<sup>27</sup>

8. The precise membership and relationship in the Communion of Saints.<sup>28</sup>

9. Whether or not prayer should be offered to, for, or through departed saints.<sup>29</sup>

Many of these points are of cherished meaning in the devotion of the Orthodox Churches especially. No one is regarded as an insuperable barrier to Christian unity.

When we turn to the sacraments, the principal differences of conviction have already been noted (ii, c, above):

<sup>23</sup> *Faith and Order*, Edinburgh 1937, p. 231.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 236-38.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.



10. The number of the sacraments—whether (a) seven, (b) two, or (c) none.

11. "Whether and in what way [the sacraments] are to be deemed necessary to salvation."<sup>30</sup>

12. Whether administration by a validly ordained presbyter or bishop is necessary to the validity of a sacrament.<sup>31</sup> With respect to point 11, it is suggested "that some further mutual understanding and agreement is required as a condition of full union." Point 12, as we have seen, is really an issue within the doctrine of orders (point 17, below).

With respect to the ministry, three minor differences appear:

13. In what sense "the ministry was 'instituted' by our Lord."<sup>32</sup>

14. The meaning to be attached to the laying-on of hands as the form of ordination, and by whom it should be administered.<sup>33</sup>

15. The importance to be attached to apostolic succession.<sup>34</sup>

We come, finally, to the two issues which are recognized as presently insuperable obstacles to the achievement of fullest Christian unity:

16. Whether membership in the Church should embrace (a) "all who have been baptized and have not by deed or word repudiated their heritage," or (b) only "those who have made an open profession of faith in Christ and in

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 240-43.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 246 f.

whose lives some measure of the spirit of Christ may be discerned.”<sup>35</sup>

This is a matter of the utmost importance to Christians of Baptist and allied affiliations. Declares the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland in response to the Edinburgh Report:

We are aware that our view of baptism . . . is not shared by many of our fellow Christians. Nevertheless it is to us a vital matter, which we cannot with a good conscience surrender while we view the Scriptures as we do and regard their authority as final. We desire others to know that for us the “necessary condition of receiving the grace of a sacrament is faith in the recipient.” This is fundamental with us.<sup>36</sup>

The Baptist World Congress dealt with the contrasts between Baptists and others in doctrines affecting church union in somewhat more general terms. It gave approval to a report voicing this strong sentiment:

It is clear that the most insistent sentiment for union contemplates union along episcopal and sacramental lines which are in conflict with all Baptist history, and which contravene basal convictions of almost all Baptists concerning both the essential Gospel and the constitution and function of the Christian Church. Our replies indicate a rather extensive present feeling that on such matters it would be useless for Baptists to confer.<sup>37</sup>

The Disciples of Christ advance a cogent argument in favor of “adult baptism” on both historical and ethical grounds, but support the statement that “the soundest justification, on modern lines, for the retention of ‘believer’s baptism’ is its intrinsic value and its actual service to

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>36</sup> *Statement Received from the Churches on the Report of the Edinburgh Conference, Second Series*, p. 15.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

religious experience.”<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, Baptist churches have entered into organic union with churches not holding to “believer’s baptism” in China, Siam, and Japan, and have engaged in serious discussion looking toward similar unions in North India and Great Britain.<sup>39</sup>

17. The nature and authority of the Christian ministry, more particularly the character of apostolic succession. Our earlier study fastened upon this as the one issue which, in the view of the vast majority of churchmen—the more extreme Baptists excepted—alone stands in the way of the achievement of church union. It is important to be clear that the division is *not* over the question of whether there be such a thing as apostolic succession: “In every case Churches treasure the Apostolic Succession in which they believe.” The division concerns solely the *locus* of apostolic succession, whether it resides in:

a) The succession of bishops in the principal sees of Christendom, handing down and preserving the Apostles’ doctrine, and . . . a succession by laying-on of hands. [Episcopal.]

b) The inseparability of Church and ministry and the continuity of both. [Old Catholic and Orthodox.]

c) A succession of ordination by presbyteries duly constituted and exercising episcopal functions, and . . . the succession of presbyters in charge of parishes, with special emphasis on the true preaching of the Word and the right administration of the Sacraments. [Presbyterian and Reformed.]

d) The maintenance of the Apostles’ witness through the true preaching of the gospel, the right administration of the Sacraments, and the perpetuation of the Christian life in

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48 n.

<sup>39</sup> H. Paul Douglass, *A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity*, pp. 104, 117, 2, 46, 124.

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the Christian community. [Congregational, Baptist, Disciples, etc.]<sup>40</sup>

As the concluding report of the Edinburgh Conference points out: "We find that the obstacles most difficult to overcome consist of elements of 'faith' and 'order' combined, as when some form of Church government or worship is considered a part of the faith."<sup>41</sup> The new British secretary of the World Council of Churches has recently stated the issue with admirable clarity and succinctness: "This division resolves itself broadly into those who hold that the Catholic order of the threefold ministry is of the faith of the Church and those who hold it to be either of convenient administration or a corruption of New Testament order."<sup>42</sup>

This, if we are to trust the official declaration of the churches' representatives in ecumenical council, is the nub of the problem of Christian unity.

### iv

Thus far, our discussion may have appeared steeped in trivia and embogged in technicalities. Yet these trivia and technicalities are the realities of the problem of Christian unity as the several communions envision it. These issues must be clearly grasped and held constantly in view.

In conclusion, several general reflections may be offered:

1. The distinction between "Christian unity" and "church union" with which we began, while universally accepted, is, in some respects, specious. Christian unity which does not imply and make possible whatever degree of church union may be held to be the ultimate desideratum

<sup>40</sup> *Faith and Order*, Edinburgh 1937, pp. 246-48.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>42</sup> Oliver S. Tomkins, "The Nature of Oecumenical Co-operation," *The International Review of Missions*, July 1945, p. 302.

is something less than genuine and true Christian unity. Those of extreme "congregational" outlook who honestly believe that God wills no organized spiritual relationship among Christ's disciples beyond the association of individuals in local churches, may, with consistency, maintain that the whole duty of Christians is fulfilled through the realization of Christian unity, provided it assumes complete recognition of spiritual equality. But those (for example, Anglicans) who hold that God wills church union of whatever degree cannot practice relations of true Christian unity with others, whether individuals or bodies, whom they regard as ineligible for fellow membership within the united Church. The churchman of whatever affiliation who does not recognize the full spiritual parity as churchmen of fellow Christians of another communion is not, in fact, in fellowship with them; if he supposes that he is, he is self-deceived. That is the unreality, if not insincerity, in which great numbers of Episcopalians and others are today, often unconsciously, involved. That is the source of the unreality which tinctures much "Christian co-operation" and "church federation." This is not to urge the abandonment of such co-operation and federation. But it is important, in the interests of common honesty, to face the degree of covert insincerity with which they are infected.

From this recognition, it follows: The crux of the problem of Christian unity lies not in a decision as to the ultimate goal between fellowship and federation or corporate union (i, l, a and c or d, above) or between federation and corporate union (i, l, c and d), but rather in the achievement of full mutual recognition, involving interchange of membership, interchange of ministries, and intercommunion (i, l, b). The determination of structural relationships, whether merely fellowship (a) or federation (c) or

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corporate union (*d*), while still important and difficult, then remains to be decided in terms of historic precedent, or discernment of divine intention, or practical usefulness.

2. In an earlier age when many Christians' lives were circumscribed by the affairs of their local community, the extreme "congregational" ideal of the Church as a local association of individual Christians might have sufficed despite the overwhelming testimony of Christian history from the earliest decades as to its insufficiency. Today two factors have rendered it obsolete: the reclamation of deeper awareness of the organic interrelatedness of humanity—the concept of "community"—and the inescapable emergence of interrelatedness in the modern world. It may be doubted whether any major Christian groups—save the more perverse American Southern Baptists—still hold the congregation (*i*, 2, *a*, above) to be an adequate ideal for the organized Christian Church. From this it follows: In the fulfillment of Christ's ideal for the existential Church, choice lies between federation and corporate union (*i*, 1, *c* and *d*).

3. To substantiate their contentions, one and another proponent of alternative positions on the disputed issues make appeal to (*a*) Christian origins, or (*b*) historic development, or (*c*) present desirability. It is probable that a proposed solution of any of the issues, to win universal acceptance, must be able to establish support on all three grounds. Here is part of the wisdom of the Lausanne-Edinburgh formula concerning church order: In view of the place of the episcopate, the presbyterate, and the congregation (*a*) in the early Church, (*b*) in the Church through the centuries, and (*c*) in the present practice of

the churches, all three must find their appropriate places in a reunited Church.

4. Here, also, is embodied the most promising single tactic in the actual achievement of larger Christian unity—the *principle of comprehension*. It implies:

There was variety in practice at the outset.

There has been variety in practice through the Christian centuries.

There is variety in practice today.

This variety cannot be due wholly to error or sin, though these have had their part in its development.

Christian unity, therefore, should envision the inclusion of persistent variations, stripped, so far as may be, of their accidental or willful extravagances, but without loss of the essential validities testified to by origin, historic persistence, present fruitfulness.

Let us attempt to apply the principle of comprehension to the three most intractable issues as they have been discovered above: (a) baptism, (b) the Eucharist, (c) the ministry.

With regard to baptism and the Eucharist, I would suggest—and I am not bold enough to suppose that the suggestion would be widely recognized or accepted—that, in each case, what we have, *in fact*, is not a single sacrament in variant forms but two sharply distinguishable though of course related ordinances branching from a single root, and that each possesses distinctive validity and value not possessed by the alternative form, each with the support of early Christian origin, historic development, and present effectiveness.

a) *Baptism*. In the dispute over “infant baptism” versus “believer’s baptism,” the argument from origins most

clearly lies with proponents of the latter. Christian baptism, continuing the tradition of John the Baptist's movement and Jesus' own baptism, was originally for adults on responsible personal confession of sin, repentance, and faith. We do not know how early or under what impulses the baptism of infants originated—presumably very early. Moreover, the intimate corporate character of family ties in that society must be fully weighed; doubtless, the father and mother were assumed to act in some sense for their offspring, and whatever consequences followed were shared by the children; the early evidence for *household* baptism<sup>43</sup> argues to the same conclusion. We do know that the primitive view and practice of baptism early fell under semimagical concepts associated with "original sin" and the almost automatic washing away of guilt, and that these strongly influenced the transition from adult to infant baptism.

The truth is that the Christian Church stands in need of not one but two successive ordinances of admission into full membership in the Church. As it happens, these two are precisely embodied in the alternative forms of the sacrament of baptism:

"Infant baptism," when freed from magical associations, is primarily a rite of thanksgiving, recognition, and consecration—of thanksgiving to God for the gift of the child, of recognition of his preliminary membership in *CHRIST'S CHURCH*, and of consecration of parents and church to his rearing in Christian faith and life.

"Believer's baptism" (confirmation) seals the responsible life commitment of the adult to Christ, and welcomes him into full membership in the *CHURCH*.

The two ordinances are radically different, though related as two successive stages in a continuous development; nei-

<sup>43</sup> I Cor. 1:16.



ther can fulfill the purpose and meaning of the other; each is indispensable; each is of such paramount importance as to constitute a sacrament. A church without both lacks the fullness of Christian heritage; its sacramental system is not invalid—it is “incomplete.” The ideal Christian church order would make provision for both sacraments, marking the first two principal steps in each Christian’s life within the CHURCH. The retention of the two practices of administration—sprinkling and immersion—would be not inappropriate; infant dedication is the anticipation of full adult consecration. And the common root of the two sacraments would thus be symbolized. In the interest of fidelity to origins, and no less, so many hold, in view of its profound present meaningfulness, adult baptism by immersion might well be recovered as a sacred rite for the whole CHURCH OF CHRIST. Wheeler Robinson argues a strong case: “The soundest justification, on modern lines, for the retention of ‘believer’s baptism’ is its intrinsic value and its actual service to religious experience.”<sup>44</sup>

b) *The Eucharist*. Similarly, with the central sacrament of all the churches. Origins argue for the nonliturgical practice. The argument from historic development supports the Catholic form. Considerations of present effectiveness may be weighed in either scale. The fact is that we have two rites which very early deviated from a common root:

Originally, the Lord’s Supper, following the scriptural instructions for its institution, aimed to commemorate by reproduction the Last Supper. It was held in connection with an ordinary meal. It employed, as Jesus had done, the homely essentials of daily food—bread and wine. It sought to re-create the setting, atmosphere, and meaning of the

<sup>44</sup> “The Faith of the Baptists,” *The Expository Times*, July 1927, p. 454.

## THE ISSUES OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

Meal of the Twelve. It was through and through communal, a "common meal." Emphasis centered on commemoration, community, consecration.

The emergence of the ritual Eucharist is hidden in historic uncertainties. Here, again, spontaneous development and ingression of semimagical if not positively pagan influences joined hands. Emphasis on commemoration was displaced by stress on celebration. The communal feature receded; individual communication advanced. The role of the officiant was magnified, that of the participant lessened. Not the life and death and continuing presence of the human Master but the mystical presence of the eternal and resurrected Logos claimed the focus of worship. Transactional connotations bathed the rite. The main point is: The ultimate development in the full-orbed Mass is at such remove from the origin in the Supper as to render kinship almost indiscernible. Sufficient evidence is the fact that the Mass can be "celebrated" without the presence of worshippers; the "observance" of the Supper except among a company of disciples is unthinkable. It may safely be said that a stranger to Christian practice who found himself successively before the altar at High Mass, where elaborately vested priests chant before silent abject spectators, and then amidst a simple commemoration of the Lord's Supper, where men and women gather about a table and pass plate and cup from hand to hand while joining in hymns, would never suspect that he was witnessing "two forms of a single sacrament."

Again, profound and nonreciprocal meanings and values, both historic and contemporary, are embedded in each. No median form embracing both sets of meanings and values is possible; the lines of development and the underlying presuppositions associated with each are too radically di-

vergent. Neither is the equivalent of, or can replace, the other. Both are needed. A church without both lacks the fullness of Christian heritage. Its sacramental system is not invalid; it is "incomplete." The ideal Christian church order might make provision for both—the early morning celebration of the altar where the priest as celebrant offers oblations in behalf of the individual worshipers and mediates to them the assurance of pardon and power which each appropriates to his own benefit, and the periodic observance of a common meal where companies of disciples surround their Lord's table to reclaim in memory and thus in present reality his companionship. As with baptism, the two sacraments would have in common, to recall their common root, only one factor—the "matter," bread and wine—and even here, strict consistency might dictate for the Supper a common loaf and water.

c) *The ministry*—the heart of present controversy concerning Christian unity. Here, the evidence from origins vindicates variety; no longer can it be gainsaid by honest scholarship that at least the three principal alternative types of order—episcopate, presbyterate, congregation—can claim authority in the earliest church practice.<sup>45</sup> The argument from development strongly sustains an episcopal structure; within two centuries at most, the threefold order was well-nigh universal. But, unless we are to brand the most distinctive contribution of the Reformation worthless, the historic experience of four centuries points back to the original tradition.

The fact is that each of the three main types of church order rests firmly on earliest Christian practice, is vindicated by centuries of tested experience, and justifies itself by

<sup>45</sup> See B. H. Streeter, *The Primitive Church*.

current fruitfulness. Happily, as with baptism and the Eucharist, they are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they are mutually supplementary. And they can be comprised within a single comprehensive order, of higher authenticity in terms of fidelity to origins and of richer promise for practical effectiveness than any one of them alone. The Lausanne-Edinburgh formula furnishes the theoretical justification. The South India Scheme outlines its concrete implementation. The higher truth is: Since no order for the Church's ministry is fully complete unless it embraces all that God has wrought for his purposes through the ministry since the earliest days, no one of the existing ministries is complete; therefore no one of them is fully valid.

I have urged that the initial goal for Christian unity is not church union but *mutual recognition*. This is now sought mainly through mutual recognition of validity of contrasted sacraments and orders, especially the ministry—mutual recognition of *equal validity*. If my argument is sound, that way reflects neither historic truth nor present fact. A true starting point would be common admission of common incompleteness, and therefore of imperfect validity. With that once granted, the argument between different traditions becomes one over *relative* validities, one of mores and lesses. At once we are in a realm where absolute claims are outlawed and agreements are made comparatively easy.

Applying this principle to the crucial issues of the ministry, we see that effort has thus far been directed toward securing mutual recognition of the full and equal validity of the three main types, and their inclusion on a parity in a more comprehensive church order. It is precisely here that many present negotiations and discussions are halted. It is my suggestion that a sound procedure would be a

common recognition that: (1) All three forms obtained in the early Church and must therefore be present in the true Church. (2) All three major traditions departed from full order of the true Church in their omission of one or more forms, and are therefore currently incomplete. (3) For recovery of full orders, each must avail itself of the neglected elements; to that end, an appropriate rite by which each is admitted to the tradition which it does not now possess should mark entrance by each into the full ministry of the CHURCH OF CHRIST. This is the procedure sometimes called "the extension of orders." It is, as I understand it, the procedure being explored in Australia and Canada. It more nearly accords with realities of origins, history, and present fact, and promises a richer as well as truer ministry for a united Church, than any attempt to establish the supremacy of a particular, and partial, church order.

5. Lastly, reverting to the original and basic question—the *nature of the Christian unity sought*: Basically, the issue is between the two oldest and most persistent philosophies—the "Platonic" versus the "Aristotelian" views of the right relation of the eternal and the temporal, the ideal and the existential. Applied to the doctrine of the Church, it is the question as to whether the transcendental reality of unity should seek and achieve actualization in the structures of human organization, as to whether the Church Triumphant (i, 2, e) supplies the normative pattern for the Church Militant (i, 2, c) and its several parts (i, 2, a and b). There is slight evidence that it was so regarded in earliest times; the first Christians lived under Platonic conceptions of the relation of the eternal and the temporal. Since the era of the so-called "undivided Church," Aristotelian pre-

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suppositions have largely dominated Christians' ideal for the existential CHURCH. At the Reformation, the other (Platonic) assumptions returned, especially in Lutheran and some sectarian theory. Here is the controlling division, seldom recognized in its true character, on "the nature of Christian unity" today.

We have seen that current discussion moves between two ideal alternatives—federation and corporate union (i, 1, c and d). To these two alternatives correspond two controlling concepts—the Community of Christians and the Body of Christ. One is drawn from biology, from the realm of organism, and defines a structure in which incomplete and complementary organs are held in necessary and indispensable unity. The other is taken from corporate personal relationships and describes a society to create which autonomous members join in voluntary and deliberate association. One suggests functional fragments which must cohere for individual survival; the other, independent individuals who choose to co-operate in common devotion. One figure is sustained by the mighty authority of Paul and the vast weight of Christian tradition. The other fits snugly into a dominant category of contemporary thought.

As an ideal for Christian unity, the figure of the Body of Christ is incomparable. It is neither desirable nor possible that it should be superceded by any other. But it must be conceded that evidence is wholly lacking that Paul ever intended it as a figure to suggest the structural relations of organized Christian churches or Churches; and the realities of church relationship in his time are wholly against such an assumption. It is a figure suited to the CHURCH as a spiritual and transcendent organism (i, 2, d and e) rather than to churches as existential organizations (i, 2, a, b, and c).

On the other hand, the figure of the CHURCH as a community of Christians or of Churches which dominates the concept of federation is no less inadequate. The true relationship of organizations of Christians is far more intimate and primordial than categories of voluntary association can suggest.

There is a third possibility. It might lay claim to the higher authority of Jesus himself. It is the figure of the Family of God. It is drawn from the most intimate and precious of all human affinities—that order to which individuals belong by birth, from whose compulsive bonds they escape with the winning of independence, to whose mature obligations and enrichments they surrender themselves gladly as they grow toward the measure of the stature of spiritual manhood and womanhood. It is an order which unites the essential meanings of organic and indissolvable kinship and of free and profound common loyalty; an order which conserves both the autonomy of persons and their necessary interdependence for individual and corporate fulfillment. It is a figure whose possibilities and appropriateness as a normative ideal for the Church—congregation, Communion, and CHURCH UNIVERSAL—have hardly been explored.

Applied to the individual Christian, it would mean that each is born into the CHURCH OF CHRIST (symbolized by infant baptism) and can never be severed from it save by deliberate rupture of ties of utmost intimacy and obligation, but that the full significance and responsibilities of this given relationship must be apprehended and assumed by conscious and responsible commitment (adult baptism or confirmation).

Applied to churches and Churches, it would mean that each acknowledges its primordial membership within the

CHURCH; separation from it is culpable denial of the most precious and compelling birthright. But the assumption of full participation and obligation in its life is by responsible decision. For the structural relationship of churches and Churches, it might imply an order closer to federation than corporate union, but a relationship in which the loose and inadequate ties of voluntary association are replaced by the rich and inescapable bonds of family kinship.

6. A final comment. Let us imagine a dispassionate non-Christian (perhaps the mythical Man from Mars whose presence we have earlier invoked) observing churchmen in their solemn efforts to heal the divisions in CHRIST'S CHURCH, and thus effect what all affirm to be God's will for that CHURCH. He could hardly fail to note that, if the entire content of Christian doctrine were spread along a line, no differences sufficiently serious to prevent union are to be discovered over the greater part of that line—in what Christians believe concerning God, the world, man, Christ, salvation, immortality. The only segment of the line containing serious obstacles to Christian unity lies at the extreme last end—in the Church's view of itself. It could hardly escape his attention, further, that within this one area of major difficulty differences which are held to be crucial occur at only one point—in the interpretation of the origin, ordination, and authority of the Christian ministry. When he reflected, further, that the overwhelming majority of the Churches' spokesmen at any ecclesiastical gathering or on any theological commission are clergy, might he not be struck by the fact that the single point, which, according to their confession, prevents the unity of the CHURCH concerns what those who are charged with



perpetuating or healing the CHURCH'S divisions—the ministry—believe about themselves? Might he be tempted to the conclusion that what is required for the unity so fervently espoused is not so much additional argument or further light as downright conversion—conversion of the ministry? *C'est à rire*—or, perhaps better, *c'est à pleurer*.

Part

V

CONCLUSION



## Chapter 9

### REVIVAL AND REUNION

i

WE HAVE considered in Chapter 6 the dialectic of action and reaction which characterizes human existence, and not least the thought and life of the Christian churches.

However, there is a deeper logic within history which appears to pervade it all and direct the fontal currents of human culture. To a casual observation, it also appears to follow a pattern of oscillation; it manifests alternate spiritual renewal and spiritual recession. As we noted earlier, at least four times in the nineteen centuries such alternation has recurred in broad outline.<sup>1</sup> But this logic does not follow the simple dialectic of thesis and antithesis; it cuts right across the tug of extreme opposites. It is far profounder, far more significant for the spiritual life of mankind.

Moreover, within the surface features of oscillation in each major epoch of advance and retreat there is discernible a more elemental sequence which we may call "the logic of spiritual vitality." It appears to move through four major phases, tracing a descending spiral of four levels of waning

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 41-50.

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spiritual power. That logic, also, has been re-enacted again and again in the Church's pilgrimage.

The first ten centuries of church history illustrate its outworking in broad outline: the originating impulses of Christianity's birth—intense, narrow, passionate, but creative, prolific, and powerful beyond any previous impulse in the human story; *then* the long centuries of wider outreach, of domestication within the envining world of empire and culture, of theological and organizational articulation—a period of patently diminished vitality but of broadened hold upon men's minds and upon public allegiance; *then* an essentially defensive phase, marked by comprehensive theological formulation but also by clouded vision and diluted purity; *then* the comparative sterility of the Dark Ages, with ominous portent for the Christian movement's survival. The descending curve had touched bottom. Only revival could save it.

Revival flamed in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Vitality reclaimed the top of the spiral, and essentially the same four-step descent was retraced, though more obscurely, through the great Middle Ages. Again nadir was reached in the barrenness and corruption of late medieval Christendom. To those with eyes to see, the warning once more was—rebirth or death.

The Protestant Reformation was the answer; indeed, in the perspective of this logic, that is its significance. Then the spiral decline began again. In broad generalization, the sixteenth century was a period of religious revival and reformation, the seventeenth of theological and ecclesiastical consolidation and controversy, the eighteenth of theological disintegration and religious sterility.

Once more, the fate of Christianity appeared to hang in the balance. Again, the saving medicine was forthcoming

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—through the Moravians, the Wesleys, Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and related renewals. The curve returned sharply to its point of origin. The nineteenth century achieved spiritual revitalization and theological reconstruction, and parented the prodigious achievements which we surveyed at the beginning.

Note that, while loss of spiritual vitality is by a gradual, step-by-step descent, recovery is never by a gradual ascent but always by drastic rebirth. Moreover, while it is obvious that in each of these four great epochs the logic of spiritual vitality has followed a closely parallel sequence, it is also clear that there has been marked acceleration of pace in successive eras. In the most recent era, not ten centuries, but barely one was required for passage through the main phases. And, in accordance with a law which appears to rule every aspect of our contemporary world, the speeding-up process continues to advance apace

### ii

What is the bearing of all this upon our concern? It may be found in facing the question, Where do we stand today in this oft-repeated logic of spiritual vitality? Does anyone doubt the answer to that question?

Here the wider record of the past half century is shadowed. During this period there has been amazing advance in Christian outreach and Christian co-operation. There has been no comparable rebirth of Christian vitality. There has been no notable renewal among the Christian churches of the world since that great movement of the Spirit in the closing decades of the nineteenth century which claimed as its principal agents Dwight L. Moody and Henry Drummond, and which so largely empowered the remarkable advances since.

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Let us trace this four-step logic through this period of which we have knowledge, not through hearsay or the record of history, but through personal acquaintance. We can watch its movement (as I have elsewhere attempted to portray it more fully<sup>2</sup>) through the religion of four successive generations:

1. To our elders—our parents or grandparents, and those whom we still revere as elder statesmen—Christian faith was a familiar reality of inner personal life, as natural and as inevitable as the front doorstep and the nursery, family pets and the village green. Memory could not reclaim a time when it had not been so. Religion held as ineradicable a place in the earliest recollections of childhood as games and meals, the face of a loved nurse, and the excitement of summer holidays. The forms of religion—family worship; grace at meals (not a perfunctory and half-apologetic grace, but a genuine and reverent thanksgiving); family occupancy of the family pew every Sunday morning and evening; the Sabbath, a day unmistakably distinguished from every other day—these outward forms of religion were as inevitable events in the family regimen as rising and eating, brushing the teeth and going to bed. Let it not be inferred, however, that it was a matter of outward form only. The experience of religion—the “feeling for religion”—had taken as strong and stubborn a grip on that generation’s inmost natures as the favorite haunts of childhood, the unforgettable songs or ballads, the touch of human love itself. One could never afterward wholly escape its influence. In later life one might try to forget it, or neglect it, or even repudiate it; but one could never eradicate it. Religion was the most fundamental and indispensable of life’s concerns, outranking national loyalty or even family loyalty. Christian faith was organic

<sup>2</sup> *The Plain Man Seeks for God*, pp. 20–24.

to one's very existence. It occupied the focal center of life by which everything else, both convictions and activities, was determined. Life would have been hopelessly impoverished as well as rudderless without it. It would be quite untrue to say that religion pre-empted all of life. But its position was central; it stood at the core of life whence all else proceeded. And its title to that status was beyond dispute. One might refuse religion sovereignty within one's life, one might become careless in one's church loyalty and religious practices; but one hardly questioned religion's rightful place. So, with the certainty of God. Ask the typical layman of that generation whether he believed there was a God, and his reply might well have been an impatient "Of course," with some voicing of surprise that anyone should be so foolish as to ask the question. Not that men always acted as though God were the first and most indisputable and most important reality. But, generally speaking, men felt that they ought so to act. They believed the reality of God to be as sure as the reality of the physical universe or their own selves.

2. The religion of the next generation—shall we say of those now sixty years of age or so?—was inherited by them from their fathers. It was transmitted by contagion, by those subtle yet familiar processes through which any great body of living conviction and experience is made real to an oncoming generation and becomes part of their personal possession. In great measure, it made good its claim upon their loyalties, was ingrafted into their inner consciousnesses, and became a permanent element in their lives. To be sure, for the most part it was not an original discovery by them; it was derivative. The flame of religious passion burned a little more dimly, a little less warmly, than it had with their fathers. But it sufficed. To employ a homely



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metaphor, we may say that the inoculation was successful. To a considerable degree, that inherited religion still satisfies the spiritual needs of those whose early life was fed upon its rich and confident vitality.

3. But the process of vital transmission did not continue. Very generally, the religion of the second generation was not inheritable. In any event, it was not transmitted. The inoculation did not "take." With few exceptions, the experience of personal religion failed to take root in the spiritual life of the third generation, of those now in middle life. For many of them, religion is an irrelevant matter, the Church and all it represents an affair of no concern. Even where the reaction has not been so acute, religion is something which has been passed down to them from the past and which they feel an obligation to sustain. Many splendid young laymen carry forward "their parents' interests." They function on church boards and committees. They continue charitable contributions in the amounts of their parents' gifts. But often these activities represent their parents' interests, not their own. And the observances of religion? Family pews may be maintained and given intermittent occupancy. Children are sent to Sunday school. A hurried, mumbled, and embarrassed grace may be said at meals. But all this tends to be perfunctory observance of exercises which once were important and therefore ought to be continued. Indeed, the practices of religion are increasingly bathed in an atmosphere of commemoration. It is all done very much as a dignified and reverent tribute to a memory of the past rather than as a symbol of a living, creative present reality. It is a re-enactment of a story familiar—a once living ritual has become a repetition of rote.

4. And the present younger generation, the generation in our universities and recently in the armed forces? The

true situation is clearly disclosed in the well-nigh unanimous testimony of chaplains; it has been well known in recent years by those who work much with youth, especially college students. To the latter, prevailingly, religion is something almost wholly external to their familiar experience and almost wholly foreign to workaday living. Far from being of the bread and water of family life, its place is akin to that of the medical specialist—an awesome though perhaps necessary individual who invades the household occasionally, usually in time of crisis or special need. The forms of religion, if observed at all, are comparable to the semiannual visit to the dentist—periodic interruptions of the family routine from which one returns to resume the business of normal living again. Eleven o'clock Sunday mornings is far more likely to find them teeing up for the first hole of the local golf course than bowing in prayer in the family pew at the village church. As a personal experience, religion often appears to contemporary youth as a mysterious business—something viewed from the outside, something which is supposed to have profound inner meaning, but to whose holy of holies youth has never been introduced. The attitude of youth toward personal religion may be likened to that of someone who happens upon the ceremony of a strange people in an unknown tongue; obviously, here is something impressive taking place, something profoundly meaningful to the initiates, but he cannot comprehend a word of it. Youth's most generous verdict is likely to be, "It meant a lot to dad, or granddad." To this younger generation religion is, at most, one among the incidental or peripheral interests of life, like politics or the theater or aeronautics or psychic research. It is thought of as something tacked on to the normal business of living—to make life more beautiful or comforting or reassuring; or, it may be,

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more exacting, difficult, unpleasant. It is one of the multitude of matters in which one may take interest if he chooses, but he need feel no compunction to do so. In the oft-repeated aphorism, "Religion has become an elective in the university of life."

Let me restate this analysis more briefly. We are familiar with the saying that a great financial fortune in America may be expected to last about four generations. It is accumulated by the first; it is enjoyed by the second; it is dissipated by the third; it is gone for the fourth. There is a law of the spiritual life, illustrated times beyond numbering in Christian history, which guides religious vitality through a cycle of four stages, if not always precisely four generations. In the first phase faith is a living, vibrant, all-pervading, all-controlling inner reality, holding unchallenged sovereignty over the purposes and loyalties and conduct of life. In the second phase it has become an inherited treasure, somewhat real to the inner life though with vitality cooled in the process of transmission; about it, there is something of the backward look, the recollection of a beautiful but fading memory; most important, it has been gently removed from the controlling center of life to a position of important but distinctly secondary status. In the third phase religion is a legacy from the past with little warmth or living reality for those entrusted with its destinies; its continuance is a mechanical perpetuation of something which once had meaning; most important, it has been removed from a secondary though important position and has become one among the incidental concerns of life. In the final phase, religion is irrelevant.

For the vast masses of American youth today, that is Christian faith's status and meaning. Thus is posed the most momentous of all the manifold problems which confront

contemporary Christianity. The greatest single danger threatening the churches of Christ in our day is not contagion from the diseases of secular society, or even the perpetuation of piddling divided ineffectiveness, but internal sterility through lack of indispensable spiritual renewal. Our great need is—revival. The true destiny of Christ's Church in our day, God's intention for it, is—revival.

In his charge to his successor as president of Union Seminary, in November 1945, Henry Sloane Coffin spoke of the more favorable "intellectual climate" for Christian faith today than twenty years ago. He pointed to the title of a recent book—*The Christian Answer*. A score of years ago the title of such a book more probably would have been "The Christian Question," or at most "The Christian Quest."

It is true: The winds of doctrine are blowing more advantageously for Christianity today. Let us give thanks for that.

But every sailor, even an amateur skipper, knows well that not one but two factors determine the direction and movement of his craft. There are the winds which blow upon the surface. And there are the deep, undersurface tides, moving silently and inexorably, controlling his advance or retreat far more powerfully than the surface breezes.

It is true that the surface winds blow today in directions more helpful to the Christian Church. But *the tides*—these have been setting dead against everything of our concern, and for more than a generation. Two world wars in a quarter century are only the most obvious evidence. Despite all the statistics of church growth and church prosperity, in the larger view we are not gaining ground—we are not even holding our own.

## CONCLUSION

Here is another, and inescapable, imperative to revival.

### iii

Whence may we expect the needed revival? What form should it take?

Here, forecast is most vacuous, attempts to create and control revival are most futile. Here we confront the "sovereign irresponsibility" of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is more fatuous than the effort to force the living flow of the Spirit in our time through the rutted and encrusted and outmoded channels of previous renewals. That is the fatal mistake of most contemporary efforts to bring on revival. The new wine will have new wineskins. "The Spirit bloweth where it listeth." But from the recent history we may hazard two suggestions:

1. Probably it will be a *world* revival, or no revival at all. Not in the sense that all mankind will be caught by its power. But in the double sense that it will draw resources for the renewal of any particular church from the world Church and that its energies will renew the world mission of the Church with new vitality. Its instrument may be "ecumenical evangelism." Already that is our situation in evangelism among students; if one were to bring to any campus or city the group of Christians with most effective power to convince and convert youth, he would need to assemble men from a half-dozen nations and as many denominations welded into a single team—Visser 't Hooft, T. Z. Koo, Robert Mackie, Reinhold Niebuhr, Toyohiko Kagawa. We have learned from the churches in wartime that only a world Church is effective amidst planetary war. May it not be that—only a world Church is adequate to evangelize in a global age?

2. It will be revival of a *united Church*, or no revival at

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all. Not in the sense that it must await the achievement of a single Church of Christ, but in the sense that it requires far bolder and more intimate confederation of Christian churches than Protestantism has ever known. This, likewise, is a clear lesson from the recent history. Nothing less than the whole Christian community has proved able "to withstand, and having done all, to stand." May it not be—only the massed resources of the whole Church of Christ can bring significant revival to any part of Christ's Church in this day?

For myself, I lack faith to envision revival adequate to these days arising in any single church alone. But the whole of the best strength of all of our Protestant communions, firmly joined in singlehearted consecration to a common task in face of a common responsibility, and unitedly laid at the disposal of Christ's direction! There is an instrument which the living Spirit of God in his unpredictable and sovereign movement might find adequate to his purpose for his Church.

### iv

Yes, but, some will say, do not these two desiderata—unity and revival—argue against one another? We unite on the least common denominator. We are reborn by a vivid, particular faith. Is not unity always achieved on the basis of breadth at the cost of depth? And does not renewal always sacrifice breadth in the interests of depth, and thus breed fresh divisions?

On the whole, that has been the law of revival in Protestantism—until the last century. But, in one of the unpublished conclusions from his monumental study of the expansion of Christianity, Professor Latourette has pointed out that that was not the law of revival throughout the nineteenth century:

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Here, forecast is most vacuous, attempts to create and control revival are most futile. Here we confront the "sovereign irresponsibility" of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is more fatuous than the effort to force the living flow of the Spirit in our time through the rutted and encrusted and outmoded channels of previous renewals. That is the fatal mistake of most contemporary efforts to bring on revival. The new wine will have new wineskins. "The Spirit bloweth where it listeth." But from the recent history we may hazard two suggestions:

1. Probably it will be a *world* revival, or no revival at all. Not in the sense that all mankind will be caught by its power. But in the double sense that it will draw resources for the renewal of any particular church from the world Church and that its energies will renew the world mission of the Church with new vitality. Its instrument may be "ecumenical evangelism." Already that is our situation in evangelism among students; if one were to bring to any campus or city the group of Christians with most effective power to convince and convert youth, he would need to assemble men from a half-dozen nations and as many denominations welded into a single team—Visser 't Hooft, T. Z. Koo, Robert Mackie, Reinhold Niebuhr, Toyohiko Kagawa. We have learned from the churches in wartime that only a world Church is effective amidst planetary war. May it not be that—only a world Church is adequate to evangelize in a global age?

2. It will be revival of a *united Church*, or no revival at

## REVIVAL AND REUNION

all. Not in the sense that it must await the achievement of a single Church of Christ, but in the sense that it requires far bolder and more intimate confederation of Christian churches than Protestantism has ever known. This, likewise, is a clear lesson from the recent history. Nothing less than the whole Christian community has proved able "to withstand, and having done all, to stand." May it not be—only the massed resources of the whole Church of Christ can bring significant revival to any part of Christ's Church in this day?

For myself, I lack faith to envision revival adequate to these days arising in any single church alone. But the whole of the best strength of all of our Protestant communions, firmly joined in singlehearted consecration to a common task in face of a common responsibility, and unitedly laid at the disposal of Christ's direction! There is an instrument which the living Spirit of God in his unpredictable and sovereign movement might find adequate to his purpose for his Church.

### iv

Yes, but, some will say, do not these two desiderata—unity and revival—argue against one another? We unite on the least common denominator. We are reborn by a vivid, particular faith. Is not unity always achieved on the basis of breadth at the cost of depth? And does not renewal always sacrifice breadth in the interests of depth, and thus breed fresh divisions?

On the whole, that has been the law of revival in Protestantism—until the last century. But, in one of the unpublished conclusions from his monumental study of the expansion of Christianity, Professor Latourette has pointed out that that was not the law of revival throughout the nineteenth century:



## CONCLUSION

The religious awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been among the most potent sources of the growing movement toward Christian unity which is so striking a feature of the life of the Church of our generation. The revivals cut across denominational boundaries. They were accompanied by common experience, conversion, and to a striking degree were based upon common theological convictions. . . . Neither of the two greatest leaders of nineteenth century revivals in the U. S. A.—Charles G. Finney and Dwight L. Moody—gave rise to a new denomination.

In summary, we may say that, more than any of their predecessors, the revival movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have contributed notably to Christian unity.<sup>3</sup>

These latter renewals of Christian vitality have not been divisive; they have been unifying. Indeed, the same springs which poured new life through arid organisms parented the great impulses toward fellowship and unity. That was true of Finney's revival in the early years of the century. It was abundantly true of the revival led by Moody and Drummond, which at once launched the greatest missionary outreach in Christian history and inspired the interdenominational Student Movements, principal training grounds of ecumenical leadership. The same movement has been nurse-maid of both rebirth and reunion. And today, the voices which call Christian youth with greatest evangelistic power are, almost without exception, apostles of a united Christendom. Like their intrepid spokesman Kagawa, they protest: "We are not interested in your damnations—I mean, denominations. We do not understand the necessity for your damnations in the cause of Christ."

The fact that recent revivals have furthered unity suggests that they have been *true* revivals—revivals in accordance with the mind of Christ. They may point to the largest

<sup>3</sup> "Divisive and Unifying Tendencies in Revival Movements," presented to the American Theological Committee of Faith and Order.

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importance of a growing ecumenicity—that is, the most promising hope for a renewal of Christ's Church in our time.

### V

Earlier we asked, What gifts for our contemporary world's need may world Christianity bring? Here is at least part of the answer.

To an age destined to survive, or to expire, as "*one world*," we bring a *world Church*. We have seen that in the past century Christianity has become, for the first time, a *world reality*. For the first time—and in the nick of time. No one who studies closely the record of Christian churches in the war can miss this truth: only because they were cells within a living world organism, sustained by its strength when in isolation they must have perished, was the survival of many of them possible. Cut off though they have often been from direct contact, they have been upheld by contagion of heroism and support from sister churches, not infrequently those of "enemy" lands. The record of the Christian churches in wartime, so far as it is a worthy one, is a record of a world Church, a Church brought into existence by the outreach of the Christian world mission in the past century. Amidst planetary war, only a world Church has proved strong to endure.

If this has been true of churches amidst planetary war, how much truer of churches struggling to endure amidst global disintegration, and seeking to bring to the world some surcease to its conflicts, some healing to its wounds, some cure of its divisions. Whether Christianity will succeed in saving our imperiled civilization, who dares prophesy? This much we know—if it should succeed, it will be only because it has at long last become a world reality. Yes, and because

## CONCLUSION

all our churches and their leaders come increasingly to recognize that reality, to be thoroughly informed of its existence and its possibilities, to think and act always as servants of Christ's holy catholic Church throughout the world.

To an age destined to survive, if at all, as "one world," we bring the beginnings of a *united Church*. Only the beginnings, to be sure; toward the ultimate goal of a single Body of Christ, hardly more than a few scattered anticipations. And yet, against the failures of earlier centuries, significant first steps. For the first time in nineteen centuries, the Christian Church has begun to become a world *organism*. For the first time—and in the nick of time. This fact, likewise, the student of the war record cannot miss. We have said: In every area of severest testing—in occupied Europe, in Germany, in China, in Japan, among the youngest churches—fidelity in witness and effectiveness in action have been in direct ratio to the unity of all Christian groups. Old barriers have fallen; ancient antagonisms have been laid aside; Christians of all parties have joined forces as never before. Nothing less than the *whole* Christian community has proved able "to withstand, and having done all, to stand." Meantime, the world organs created so recently by the churches as channels of common effort and expressions of communal fellowship, centering in the World Council of Churches, have spoken and acted in behalf of all non-Roman Christendom with an authority and a fruitfulness without precedent in earlier Christian history.

If only a united Church is effective amidst planetary war, how much more against the demands of this fevered peace! And the first essential is this—that our churches and their leaders should come increasingly to recognize that unity, to be thoroughly informed of its existence and its agencies, to

think and act always as servants of Christ's one holy catholic Church.

## vi

A final word. But the most important by far. There is a strange paradox in the Christian Church's intercourse with culture. The effects which history adjudges to have been the Church's most important influences upon culture were not at all the effects which the Church was striving to achieve. In the main, they have been unforeseen and unintended by-products of her pursuance of her major tasks.

This has been true in every age. History discovers the most significant role of the Christian Church in successive epochs to have been—the custodian of the funded values of the past, in times of cultural disintegration and darkness; the focal principle of corporate life, in periods of social stability and cohesion; the germinative seed plot of the most fecund, most creative, most radical forces, in times of social transmutation and advance.

None of these things did the Church set out to be.

The Church of the Dark Ages did not aim to be the guardian of historic intellectual, artistic, and cultural values. The Church has in fact been a conserving factor in history because, in the measure that she was true to Jesus' faith and fidelity, she possessed inextinguishable vitality to which cultural and secular values could adhere and thus win preservation.

The Church of the Middle Ages did not aim to be the unifying principle of civilization. The Church has in fact been the focal center of community and national and even world life because, in the measure that she held firm grip on Jesus' certainty of God, she possessed the only concept adequate to furnish focal unity for corporate existence.

## CONCLUSION

The Church of the modern period did not aim to set loose revolutionary influences of reform within society. The Church has in fact been the seed plot of creative, radical forces because, in the measure that she was possessed by Jesus' vision and compassion, she has been inherently fecund and world-remaking.

The Church's distinctive ministries to civilization have been mainly quite inevitable by-products of the Church's fidelity to her main purpose: to be, in the world, a continuation of Christ's life among men.

So, in these latter days. As the late Archbishop of Canterbury pointed out in his oft-quoted enthronement sermon, Christians who went out to the ends of the earth all through the nineteenth century were not aiming to create a world-wide community. They were seeking to bring the Christian gospel to those all over the world who were without it. "Almost incidentally, the great world Christian fellowship has come into existence. But it has come to be. That is the great new fact of our era."

So, likewise, Christian leaders were seeking to effect the unity of Christ's Church, not in order that it might serve a global age, but in order that it might fulfill Christ's intention for his Church. But the community of Christ's Church has begun to be, almost incidentally, an earnest, a foretaste of the community of nations which could be and must be.

So it will be tomorrow. We do not know the greatest gift the Church will bring to society in our generation. We do know *how* it will be brought—as the Church fulfills its main and central purpose: to be, in the world, a continuation of Christ's life among men. To an age destined to survive, if at all, only through profound spiritual regeneration and re-empowerment, we bring—a GOSPEL, glorious news, light for

## REVIVAL AND REUNION

groping minds, hope for despairing hearts, strength for faltering wills. The Church's major task is—to declare and to demonstrate, by word of speech and by word of life, the glorious good news of Jesus Christ.

In our time, however, the relation between obedience to the Church's obligation to Christ and discharge of its largest service to mankind is more intimate. The conditions for its wider service are also the conditions for the fulfillment of its own central responsibility. This is the teaching of these latter days: The Church is strong in the measure that it is world wide and united; and wherever it achieves world-wide unity, God grants to it, and through it in some measure to its environing culture, rebirth.

### vii

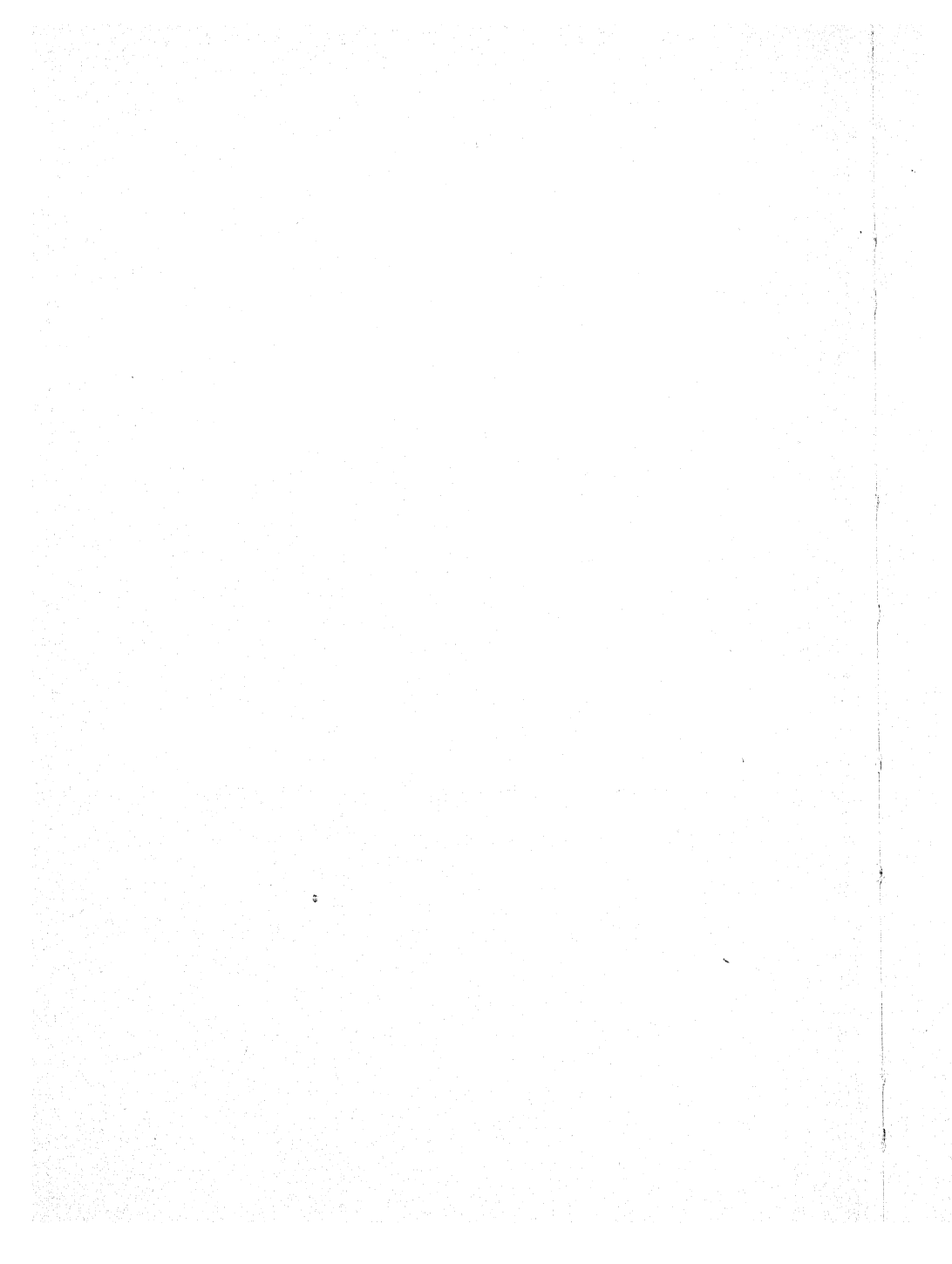
We may not see sound and profound spiritual renewal, we may not see far-reaching Christian union, in our time. It is of highest importance that we understand clearly that *this* is the true destiny of Christ's churches in our day—God's purpose for them. Our role is—to be vividly alive to that fact; to pray earnestly, and unitedly, for its coming; to wait expectantly, in eager watchfulness, for the first signs of the Spirit's manifest moving.





## APPENDIXES





## Appendix 1

### A CHRONOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN CO-OPERATION AND UNION, 1795-1946

[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1795 London Missionary Society organized.
- 1804 British and Foreign Bible Society organized.
- 1810 American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions organized.
- 1815 Basel Evangelical Missionary Society organized.
- 1816 American Bible Society organized.
- \*1817 Prussian Evangelical Union, consisting of Lutheran and Calvinist congregations, constituted by direction of Frederick William III.
- \*1817 Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia organized by the Presbytery of Halifax, the Associate or Burgher Presbytery of Truro (1786), and the General Associate or Anti-Burgher Presbytery of Pictou (1795).
- \*1820 United Secession Church in Scotland formed by union of the main streams of Burghers, Anti-Burghers, and other Seceders having their origin in the schism of 1733 in the Church of Scotland and the organization of the Associate Presbytery.
- 1822 Paris Evangelical Missionary Society organized.
- 1824 American Sunday School Union organized.
- 1825 American Tract Society organized.
- 1826 American Home Missionary Society organized.
- \*1831 Presbyterian Church of Canada in Connection with the Church of Scotland organized by presbyteries in Lower Canada.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- \*1836 Wesleyan Methodist Association in England (organized in 1835 by a secession group from the Wesleyan Methodist Conference) enlarged by addition of the Protestant Methodists (organized in 1828).
- \*1840 Presbyterian Church in Ireland formed by union of the Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod of Ireland.
- \*1840 Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in Connection with the Church of Scotland (1831) and the United Synod of Upper Canada (1831) united under the name of the former body.
- 1841 Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society organized.
- 1844 Young Men's Christian Association founded in London.
- 1846 American Missionary Association organized.
- 1846 Evangelical Alliance organized in London. First general conference.
- \*1847 United Presbyterian Church of Scotland formed by union of the United Secession Church (1820) and the Relief Church, a seceding body dating from 1761.
- 1852 Zenana Bible and Medical Mission (an evangelical interdenominational society) founded for work in India.
- 1854 Union Missionary Convention held in New York.
- 1855 Evangelical Alliance. Second general conference. Paris.
- 1855 General conference of Protestant missionaries in Bengal. Calcutta.
- 1855 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations organized at a conference held in Paris.
- 1855 Young Women's Christian Association founded in London.
- 1857 Evangelical Alliance. Third general conference. Berlin.
- \*1857 United Methodist Free Churches formed in England by union of the Wesleyan Methodist Reformers and the Wesleyan Methodist Association.
- 1858 Christian Literature Society for India founded (under the name Christian Vernacular Education Society).
- \*1858 United Presbyterian Church of North America formed by union of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian and the Associate Presbyterian Churches.
- 1858 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. Geneva.
- 1860 General conference on foreign missions. Liverpool.
- \*1860 Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America formed by union of the Presbyterian Church

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- of Nova Scotia (1817) and the Free Church of Nova Scotia (originally organized in 1833 as the Synod of the Church of Scotland in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island).
- 1860 Woman's Union Missionary Society of America organized.
  - \*1861 Canada Presbyterian Church formed by union of the Free Presbyterian Church of Canada (organized in 1844 by a secession group from the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in Connection with the Church of Scotland) and the United Presbyterian Church of Canada (first organized in 1834 as a missionary presbytery in the Canadas of the United Secession Church of Scotland).
  - 1861 Evangelical Alliance. Fourth general conference. Geneva.
  - 1861 National Bible Society of Scotland organized.
  - 1863 Hawaiian Evangelical Association organized.
  - 1863 Robert College, Istanbul, founded.
  - 1866 American University, Beirut, founded (under the name Syrian Protestant College).
  - \*1866 Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America enlarged by addition of the Free Presbyterian Church of New Brunswick (a secession body organized in 1845).
  - 1867 Evangelical Alliance. Fifth general conference. Amsterdam.
  - 1867 Lambeth Conference (of bishops in communion with the Church of England). First meeting.
  - 1867 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. Paris.
  - \*1868 Synod of the Maritime Provinces in Connection with the Church of Scotland formed by union of the Synod of New Brunswick in Connection with the Church of Scotland (1833) and the Church of Scotland in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island (organized in 1854 by a secession group from the Synod of the Free Church of Nova Scotia).
  - \*1869 Old and New School Presbyterians in the United States united, forming the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.
  - 1872 Convention of Protestant missionaries in Japan.
  - 1872 Decennial missionary conference in India. First. Allahabad.
  - 1872 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. Amsterdam.
  - 1873 Evangelical Alliance. Sixth general conference. New York.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- \*1874 Methodist Church of Canada organized by the Conference of Wesleyan Methodists in the Canadas, the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodists in the Maritime Provinces, and the Canada Conference of the Methodist New Connection.
- 1874 Mission to Lepers founded in England.
- 1875 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System organized.
- 1875 Istanbul Woman's College founded.
- 1875 Old Catholic unity conference. Bonn.
- 1875 Presbyterian Alliance of India organized.
- \*1875 Presbyterian Church in Canada formed by union of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in Connection with the Church of Scotland (1840), the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America (1860), Canada Presbyterian Church (1861), and the Synod of the Maritime Provinces in Connection with the Church of Scotland (1868).
- \*1876 Free Church of Scotland (organized as a result of the Disruption of 1843 in the Church of Scotland) enlarged by addition of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, a seceding body dating from 1743 (except a remnant not uniting).
- 1876 India Sunday School Union organized.
- 1876 Madras Christian College became a union institution.
- \*1876 Presbyterian Church of England formed by union of the English United Presbyterian Synod, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in England, and the Old English Presbyterian Churches.
- 1877 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. First meeting. Edinburgh.
- \*1877 Church of Christ in Japan [Nihon Kirisuto Kyokwai] formed by union of churches connected with the missions of Presbyterian and Reformed churches.
- 1877 General conference of Protestant missionaries of China. Shanghai.
- 1878 General conference on foreign missions. London.
- 1878 Lambeth Conference. Second meeting.
- 1878 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. Geneva.
- 1879 Evangelical Alliance. Seventh general conference. Basel.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1880 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Second meeting. Philadelphia.
- 1880 American Interseminary Missionary Alliance organized.
- 1881 Ecumenical Methodist Conference. First meeting. London.
- 1881 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. London.
- 1882 Decennial missionary conference in India. Second. Calcutta.
- 1884 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Third meeting. Belfast.
- 1884 Evangelical Alliance. Eighth general conference. Copenhagen.
- \*1884 Methodist Church in Canada formed by union of the Primitive Methodist Church, the Bible Christian Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Church of Canada (1874).
- 1885 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. Berlin.
- 1886 Lingnan University, Canton, China, founded (under the name Canton Christian College).
- 1886 Protestant Episcopal Church in the U. S. A. issued a Quadrilateral as a minimum basis for reunion of churches.
- 1886 Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions founded.
- 1887 Christian Literature Society for China founded (under the name Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge).
- \*1887 Holy Catholic Church of Japan [Nihon Sei Ko Kwai] formed by union of churches connected with the missions of the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U. S. A.
- 1888 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Fourth meeting. London.
- 1888 Centenary conference of the Protestant missions of the world. London.
- 1888 Lambeth Conference. Third meeting. Adoption of the Lambeth Quadrilateral.
- \*1888 Presbyterian Church of Brazil formed by union of churches connected with the missions of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., and the Presbyterian Church, U. S.
- 1888 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. Stockholm.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1889 World's Sunday School Convention. First. London.
- 1890 General conference of Protestant missionaries of China. Shanghai.
- 1891 Ecumenical Methodist Conference. Second meeting. Washington.
- 1891 Evangelical Alliance. Ninth general conference. Florence.
- 1891 International Congregational Council. First meeting. London.
- 1892 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Fifth meeting. Toronto.
- 1892 Decennial missionary conference in India. Third. Bombay.
- 1893 World's Sunday School Convention. Second. St. Louis.
- 1893 Foreign Missions Conference of North America (beginning in conferences of officers and representatives of foreign missions organizations) organized.
- 1894 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. London.
- 1894 World's Young Women's Christian Association organized.
- 1895 World's Christian Endeavor Union organized.
- 1895 World's Student Christian Federation founded at Vadstena, Sweden.
- 1896 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Sixth meeting. Glasgow.
- 1896 Evangelical Alliance. Tenth general conference. London.
- 1896 National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches in England organized.
- \*1896 United Evangelical Lutheran Church (designated the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church until 1945) formed by merger of the Danish Church Association and the Danish Church in North America.
- 1897 Lambeth Conference. Fourth meeting.
- \*1897 Presbyterian Church of South Africa formed by union of English-speaking churches of Presbyterian faith and polity in South Africa.
- 1898 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. Basel.
- 1898 World's Student Christian Federation conference. Eisenach, Germany.
- 1898 World's Sunday School Convention. Third. London.
- 1898 World's Young Women's Christian Association. First conference. London.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1899 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Seventh meeting. Washington.
- 1899 International Congregational Council. Second meeting. Boston.
- 1899 West China Advisory Board of Missions founded.
- 1900 Ecumenical conference on foreign missions. New York.
- 1900 General conference of Protestant missionaries in Japan. Tokyo.
- \*1900 United Free Church of Scotland formed by union of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland (1847) and the Free Church of Scotland (except a fragment not uniting).
- 1900 World's Student Christian Federation conference. Versailles.
- 1901 Ecumenical Methodist Conference. Third meeting. London.
- 1901 Evangelical Union of the Philippines organized.
- \*1901 Presbyterian Church of Australia organized.
- \*1901 Presbyterian Church of New Zealand formed by union of the Presbyterian churches in north and south New Zealand.
- \*1901 South India United Church (Presbyterian Synod) formed by merger of churches connected with the missions of the United Free Church of Scotland and the Reformed Church in America. (First stage in the development of the South India United Church.)
- 1902 Decennial missionary conference in India. Fourth. Madras.
- 1902 Federation of Christian missions in Japan organized.
- 1902 Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada organized.
- 1902 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. Christiania, Norway.
- 1902 World's Student Christian Federation conference. Sorø, Denmark.
- 1902 World's Young Women's Christian Association. Second conference. Geneva.
- 1904 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Eighth meeting. Liverpool.
- 1904 General Missionary Conference of South Africa organized.
- \*1904 Methodist Church of Australasia organized.
- \*1904 Presbyterian Church of India formed by merger of seven Presbyterian bodies.
- 1904 World's Sunday School Convention. Fourth. Jerusalem.



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[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1905 Baptist World Alliance. First meeting. London.
- \*1905 Congregational General Union in South India formed by union of churches connected with the missions of the Congregational churches of England and the United States.
- 1905 Federation of Evangelical Churches of Puerto Rico formed.
- 1905 National Missionary Society of India founded.
- 1905 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. Paris.
- 1905 World's Student Christian Federation conference. Zeist, Holland.
- 1906 American Mission to Lepers organized.
- \*1906 Cumberland Presbyterian Church (except a fragment not uniting) united with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.
- 1906 Laymen's Missionary Movement founded in the United States.
- 1906 Missionary conference on behalf of Christian work in the Mohammedan world. Cairo.
- 1906 World's Young Women's Christian Association. Third conference. Paris.
- 1907 China centenary missionary conference. Shanghai.
- \*1907 Congregational Union of Canada formed by union of the Congregational Union of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec, and the Ontario Conference of the United Brethren in Christ.
- 1907 Evangelical Alliance. Eleventh general conference. London.
- \*1907 Japan Methodist Church formed by union of churches connected with the missions of the Methodist Church in Canada and the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the United States.
- \*1907 Presbyterian Church in Korea formed by union of churches connected with the missions of the Presbyterian Church in Canada; the Presbyterian Church of Australia; the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.; and the Presbyterian Church, U. S.
- 1907 Union Theological Seminary founded in Manila.
- \*1907 United Methodist Church formed in England by union of the United Methodist Free Churches (1857), the Methodist New Connection, and the Bible Christian Church.
- 1907 World's Student Christian Federation conference. Tokyo.
- 1907 World's Sunday School Convention. Fifth. Rome.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1907 World's Sunday School Association organized at the convention at Rome.
- 1908 All-India Lutheran Conference organized.
- 1908 Council of Women for Home Missions in the United States organized.
- 1908 Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America organized.
- 1908 Home Missions Council in the United States organized.
- 1908 International Congregational Council. Third meeting. Edinburgh.
- 1908 Lambeth Conference. Fifth meeting.
- \*1908 South India United Church formed by merger of the Congregational General Union in South India and the South India United Church (Presbyterian Synod).
- 1909 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Ninth meeting. New York.
- 1909 French Protestant Federation organized.
- 1909 University of Shanghai founded, with co-operation of the Northern Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States.
- 1909 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. Barmen, Germany.
- 1909 World's Student Christian Federation conference. London.
- 1910 Hangchow Christian College, Hangchow, China, became a union institution.
- 1910 Kwansei Gakuin, Nishinomiya, Japan, became a union institution.
- 1910 Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, General Convention, issued a call for a world conference to study faith and order. (Initial move leading to the organization of the World Conference on Faith and Order.)
- 1910 Serampore College in India, theological department, opened as a union school.
- 1910 United Theological College founded at Bangalore, India.
- 1910 University of Nanking (including the university hospital) formed by merger of educational and medical institutions in Nanking.
- 1910 West China Union University founded at Chengtu, China.
- 1910 World Missionary Conference. Edinburgh.
- 1910 World's Sunday School Convention. Sixth. Washington.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1910 World's Young Women's Christian Association. Fourth conference. Berlin.
- 1911 Baptist World Alliance. Second meeting. Philadelphia.
- 1911 Ecumenical Methodist Conference. Fourth meeting. Toronto.
- 1911 Nanking Theological Seminary organized as a union institution through the merger of three denominational schools in Nanking.
- 1911 World's Student Christian Federation conference. Constantinople.
- 1912 Christian Literature Society of Japan organized.
- 1912 Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland organized.
- 1912 Federal Council of Protestant Missions in Korea organized.
- 1912 Danish Missions Council organized.
- \*1912 Holy Catholic Church in China [Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui] organized by union of churches connected with the missions of the Church of England, the Church of England in Canada, and the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.
- 1912 Union Mission Tuberculosis Sanatorium, Arogyavaram, India, founded.
- 1913 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Tenth meeting. Aberdeen.
- 1913 Committee on Co-operation in Latin America organized, with headquarters in New York.
- 1913 National Missionary Council of India, Burma, and Ceylon organized.
- 1913 Severance Union Medical College, Seoul, Korea, organized as a union institution.
- 1913 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. International conference. Edinburgh.
- 1913 World's Student Christian Federation Conference. Lake Mohonk, N. Y.
- 1913 World's Sunday School Convention. Seventh. Zurich.
- 1914 Church Peace Union founded.
- 1914 Fellowship of Reconciliation founded.
- 1914 Union Theological College, Canton, China, organized.
- 1914 World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches founded.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1914 World's Young Women's Christian Association. Fifth conference. Stockholm.
- 1915 Chosen Christian College, Seoul, Korea, founded as a union institution.
- 1915 Ginling College, Nanking, founded as a union institution.
- 1915 Women's Christian College, Madras, founded as a union institution.
- 1916 Evangelical Union of Puerto Rico organized as successor to the Federation of Evangelical Churches (1905).
- 1916 Federation of Woman's Boards of Foreign Missions of North America organized.
- 1916 Fukien Christian University, Foochow, China, organized as a union institution.
- 1916 Panama Congress on Christian Work in Latin America.
- 1916 South African Native College, Fort Hare, established through co-operation of churches and government.
- 1916 Yenching University, Peiping, organized as a union institution.
- 1917 Cheeloo University, Tsinan, China (including a theological school, a medical school, and a hospital), formed by merger of educational and medical institutions.
- \*1917 Evangelical Lutheran Church (designated the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America until 1946) formed by union of the Norwegian Synod, the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, and Hauge's Synod.
- 1918 Finnish Mission Council organized.
- 1918 Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone, became a union institution.
- 1918 Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, became a union institution.
- 1918 National Lutheran Council in the United States organized.
- \*1918 United Lutheran Church in America formed by union of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States of America, the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, and the United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South.
- 1918 Vellore Medical College for Women, Vellore, India, opened.
- 1918 Woman's Christian College of Japan, in Tokyo, founded as a union institution.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1919 Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico founded at Rio Piedras.
- 1919 Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches in England organized.
- 1919 Margaret Williamson Hospital, Shanghai, organized as a union institution.
- 1919 Negotiations opened for the formation of an all-inclusive united church in South India.
- \*1919 Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church formed by union of churches developed by the Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Mission and the Church of Sweden Mission in India.
- 1919 Union Theological Seminary, Buenos Aires, became a union institution.
- 1919 United Missionary Council of Syria and Palestine formed.
- 1920 American University at Cairo opened.
- 1920 Board of Christian Work in Santo Domingo organized, with headquarters in New York.
- 1920 International Congregational Council. Fourth meeting. Boston.
- 1920 Kinnaird College, Lahore, organized as a union institution.
- 1920 Lambeth Conference. Sixth meeting.
- 1920 Lutheran Church of China formed by churches connected with the missions established by Lutheran bodies in Europe and America.
- 1920 Swedish Mission Council organized.
- 1920 Swiss Protestant Federation organized.
- 1920 United Missionary Council of Australia organized.
- 1920 Universal Christian Conference on the Life and Work of the Church of Christ. Preliminary meeting. Geneva.
- \*1920 Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Churches in the United States united with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.
- 1920 World Conference on Faith and Order. Preliminary meeting. Geneva.
- 1920 World's Sunday School Convention. Eighth. Tokyo.
- 1921 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Eleventh meeting. Pittsburgh.
- 1921 Ecumenical Methodist Conference. Fifth meeting. London.
- 1921 International Missionary Council organized, in succession to the Continuation Committee appointed at Edinburgh in 1910.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1921 New Zealand Council of Religious Education organized through co-operation of six denominations.
- 1921 Norwegian Mission Council organized.
- 1922 Central Bureau for European Interchurch Aid organized.
- \*1922 Evangelical Church formed in the United States by union of the Evangelical Association and the United Evangelical Church.
- 1922 German Evangelical Missions Federation organized.
- 1922 International conference of church leaders at Copenhagen to consider relief for Protestant Europe.
- 1922 National Christian Council of China organized.
- 1922 National Christian Council of India, Burma, and Ceylon organized as successor to the National Missionary Council (1913).
- 1922 World's Student Christian Federation Conference. Peking.
- 1923 Association of Swiss Missions for International Relations organized.
- 1923 Baptist World Alliance. Third meeting. Stockholm.
- 1923 Lutheran World Convention. First meeting. Eisenach, Germany.
- 1923 National Christian Council of Japan organized.
- 1923 Northern Missionary Council organized with representatives from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.
- 1923 St. Christopher's Training College, Madras, founded as a union institution.
- \*1924 Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian, formed by union of churches connected with the mission work of the Church of Scotland, the United Free Church of Scotland, and the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa.
- 1924 Conference on Christian Politics, Economics, and Citizenship. Birmingham, England.
- 1924 Forman Christian College (founded in 1886), Lahore, became a union institution.
- 1924 Hua Chung College, Wuchang, formed by merger of five denominational institutions in central China.
- \*1924 Hungarian Reformed Churches in the United States united with the Reformed Church in the United States.
- 1924 Kenya Missionary Council organized.
- 1924 Korean National Christian Council organized. (Dissolved by government action in 1938.)
- 1924 United Christian Council organized in Sierra Leone.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- \*1924 United Church of Northern India formed by union of the Congregational Churches in Western India and the Presbyterian Church of India (1904).
- 1924 United Mission in Mesopotamia established as a joint enterprise of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.; the Reformed Church in America; and the Reformed Church in the United States.
- 1924 Woman's Christian Medical College, Shanghai, organized as a union institution.
- 1924 World's Student Christian Federation. General Committee. High Leigh, England.
- 1924 World's Sunday School Convention. Ninth. Glasgow.
- 1925 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Twelfth meeting. Cardiff, Wales.
- 1925 Congo Protestant Council organized.
- 1925 Congress on Christian Work in South America. Montevideo.
- 1925 Ewha College, Seoul, Korea, became a union institution.
- 1925 International Council of Religious Education formed in the United States by merger of the International Sunday School Association and the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Churches.
- \*1925 United Church of Canada formed by union of the Methodist Church (1884), the Congregational Union (1907), and the Presbyterian Church (1875), except a part not uniting.
- 1925 Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work. Stockholm.
- 1926 Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India organized, as successor to the All-India Lutheran Conference (1908).
- \*1926 Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast formed by union of churches connected with missions of the Church of Scotland and the Basel Missionary Society.
- 1926 Swiss Committee of Missions organized.
- 1926 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. World conference. Helsingfors.
- 1926 World's Student Christian Federation. General Committee. Nyborg Strand, Denmark.
- \*1927 Church of Christ in China organized.
- 1927 National Missionary Council of Australia organized.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1927 National Missionary Council of New Zealand organized.
- 1927 Near East Christian Council organized (under the name Christian Council for Western Asia and Northern Africa).
- 1927 Near East College Association organized, with headquarters in New York.
- 1927 World Conference on Faith and Order. Lausanne.
- 1928 Baptist World Alliance. Fourth meeting. Toronto.
- 1928 International Missionary Council. World conference. Jerusalem.
- 1928 National Evangelical Council in Mexico organized.
- 1928 Wanless Tuberculosis Sanatorium opened at Miraj, India.
- 1928 World's Student Christian Federation. General Committee. Mysore, India.
- 1928 World's Sunday School Convention. Tenth. Los Angeles.
- 1928 World's Young Women's Christian Association. World conference. Budapest.
- 1929 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Thirteenth meeting. Boston.
- 1929 Christian Council of Nigeria organized.
- 1929 Christian Council of the Gold Coast organized.
- \*1929 Church of Scotland formed by merger of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland (except a fragment not uniting).
- 1929 Hispanic American Evangelical Congress. Havana.
- 1929 International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa formed under the auspices of the International Missionary Council.
- 1929 Lady Irwin Tuberculosis Sanatorium, Simla Hills, India, founded as a union project.
- 1929 Lutheran World Convention. Second. Copenhagen.
- 1929 National Christian Council of the Philippines organized as successor to the Evangelical Union (1901).
- 1929 Netherlands Mission Council organized.
- 1929 Union Theological College, Foochow, China, organized as a union institution.
- \*1929 United Evangelical Church of the Philippines formed by merger of the United Brethren, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches.
- \*1930 American Lutheran Church formed by union of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Ohio and Other States, the



## APPENDIX

[\* indicates union of churches]

- Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa and Other States, and the Lutheran Synod of Buffalo.
- 1930 American Lutheran Conference organized as a federation for co-operative action. Members: American Lutheran Church; Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America; Evangelical Lutheran Church (then the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America); Lutheran Free Church; United Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (then the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).
- 1930 Henry Martyn School of Islamics opened at Lahore. (In 1941 moved to Aligarh.)
- 1930 International Congregational Council. Fifth meeting. Bournemouth, England.
- \*1930 Korean Methodist Church formed by union of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.
- 1930 Lambeth Conference. Seventh meeting.
- \*1930 Methodist Church of Mexico formed by union of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.
- 1930 National Christian Council of Siam organized.
- 1930 North American Home Missions Congress. Washington.
- 1930 Wilson College, Bombay, founded by the Church of Scotland, became a union institution.
- 1930 World Convention of the Churches of Christ [Disciples]. First meeting. Washington.
- 1930 World's Young Women's Christian Association. Council meeting. St. Cergue, Switzerland.
- \*1931 Congregational-Christian Churches organized in the United States by merger of the Congregational and Christian churches.
- 1931 Ecumenical Methodist Conference. Sixth meeting. Atlanta.
- \*1931 Ewe Presbyterian Church in West Africa organized by churches connected with the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, the Church of Scotland, and the former work of the Bremen Mission.
- \*1931 Methodist Church of South Africa formed by union of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa, the Transvaal and Swaziland District of the Wesleyan Meth-

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- odist Church in England, and the Primitive Methodist missions in the Union of South Africa.
- 1931 National Committee for Christian Religious Education organized in China.
- \*1931 United Evangelical Church in Puerto Rico formed by union of the United Brethren, Christian, and Congregational churches.
- 1931 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. World conference. Cleveland.
- 1932 Associated Boards for Christian Colleges in China organized, with headquarters in New York.
- \*1932 Methodist Church in England formed by union of the Wesleyan Methodists, the Primitive Methodist Church, and the United Methodist Church (1907).
- 1932 Near East School of Theology formed by merger of the School of Religion, Athens, and the School for Religious Workers, Beirut.
- 1932 World's Student Christian Federation. General Committee. Zeist, Holland.
- 1932 World's Sunday School Convention. Eleventh. Rio de Janeiro.
- 1933 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System. Fourteenth meeting. Belfast.
- 1933 Negotiations initiated between the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Church to achieve organic union.
- 1933 World's Student Christian Federation conference for Asia and Australasia held in Java.
- 1934 Association of Evangelical Churches of Puerto Rico succeeded the Evangelical Union (1916).
- 1934 Baptist World Alliance. Fifth meeting. Berlin.
- \*1934 Church of Christ in Siam formed by union of the Presbyterian and Baptist churches.
- \*1934 Evangelical and Reformed Church constituted by union of the Evangelical Synod of North America and the Reformed Church in the United States.
- 1934 Evangelical Confederation of Brazil organized.
- 1934 World's Young Women's Christian Association. Council meeting. Geneva.
- 1935 United Society for Christian Literature formed in England by merger of the Religious Tract Society (1799) and the

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- Christian Literature Society for India and Africa (1858).
- 1935 World Convention of the Churches of Christ [Disciples].  
Second meeting. Leicester, England.
- 1935 World's Student Christian Federation. General Committee. Chamcoria, Bulgaria.
- 1936 Christian Council of South Africa organized.
- \*1936 Evangelical Church in Guatemala formed by union of the  
Presbyterian churches and the Central American Mission.
- 1936 United Missions in the Copper Belt in Northern Rhodesia  
established.
- 1936 World's Student Christian Federation. Pacific area conference.  
Oakland, California.
- 1936 World's Sunday School Convention. Twelfth. Oslo.
- 1936 World's Young Women's Christian Association conference  
for Asia and Australasia. Colombo, Ceylon.
- 1937 Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian  
System. Fifteenth meeting. Montreal.
- 1937 Interseminary Movement, as successor to the American Inter-  
seminary Missionary Alliance (1880), organized under  
the auspices of the American Committee for the World  
Council of Churches and the Young Men's Christian Association.
- 1937 Protestant Episcopal Church, General Convention, issued  
an invitation to the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., to enter  
into negotiations to achieve organic union.
- 1937 West China Union Theological College founded at  
Chengt'u, China.
- 1937 World Conference on Church, Community, and State,  
sponsored by the Universal Christian Council for Life and  
Work. Oxford.
- 1937 World Conference on Faith and Order. Edinburgh.
- 1937 World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations.  
World conference. Mysore, India.
- 1938 International Missionary Council. World conference.  
Madras.
- 1938 Philippine Federation of Evangelical Churches replaced  
the National Christian Council formed in 1929.
- 1938 Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., General Assembly, accepted  
the proposal of the Protestant Episcopal Church to  
open negotiations on church union.
- \*1938 Reformed Church of France formed by union of the Free

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- Evangelical Churches, the Methodist Church, the Reformed Evangelical Church, and the Reformed Church.
- \*1938 United Church of Northern India enlarged by accession of the churches connected with the mission of the Evangelical and Reformed Church.
  - 1938 Utrecht Conference of representatives of the churches, convened by the Committee of Fourteen, to prepare a draft constitution for a proposed World Council of Churches.
  - 1938 World's Student Christian Federation. General Committee. Bièvres, France.
  - 1938 World's Young Women's Christian Association. Council meeting. Muskoka, Canada.
  - 1939 Baptist World Alliance. Sixth meeting. Atlanta.
  - 1939 Confederation of Churches of the River Plate [Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay] organized.
  - 1939 Ecumenical Refugee Commission of the World Council of Churches organized.
  - \*1939 Methodist Church (U. S. A.) formed by union of the Methodist Episcopal Church; the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and the Methodist Protestant Church.
  - 1939 Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., and Presbyterian Church, U. S., Joint Committee on Union, issued proposed "basic principles for union."
  - 1939 Willis F. Pierce Memorial Hospital established at Foochow, China, through union of medical institutions of the Congregational and Methodist churches.
  - 1939 World Council of Churches. Provisional Committee meeting. Paris.
  - 1939 World Conference of Christian Youth. Amsterdam.
  - 1940 Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America authorized the formation of a Commission on a just and Durable Peace.
  - 1940 Free Church Federal Council formed in England by merger of the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches (1919) and the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches (1896).
  - 1940 Home Missions Council of North America formed by merger of the Home Missions Council (1908) and the Council of Women for Home Missions (1908).
  - 1940 Australian Intercommunion Group (unofficial) of Anglicans, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians is-

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- sued a proposal for the "interchange of ministerial commissions."
- 1940 Latin American Student Christian Movement organized.
  - 1940 Northern Ecumenical Institute ("Ecumenicum") established at Sigtuna, Sweden.
  - 1941 Christian Council of Jamaica organized.
  - \*1941 Church of Christ in Japan [Nihon Kirusuto Kyodan], a united Protestant church, organized.
  - 1941 Council of Evangelical Churches in Cuba organized.
  - 1941 International Congress on Christian Education, Mexico City, under the auspices of the National Council of Evangelical Churches of Mexico and the World's Sunday School Association, North America Committee.
  - 1941 Latin American Evangelical Youth Conference. First. Lima, Peru.
  - \*1941 Methodist Church in China formed by union of churches connected with the former Methodist Episcopal Church; Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and Methodist Protestant Church, in the United States.
  - 1941 Methodist Church in South India accepted the Proposed Scheme of Church Union in South India.
  - 1941 National Council of Churches in New Zealand organized.
  - 1941 National Evangelical Council of Peru organized.
  - 1941 North American Ecumenical Conference held in Toronto, with representatives present from Latin America, United States, and Canada.
  - 1941 United Council of Church Women organized in the United States.
  - 1942 British Council of Churches organized.
  - 1942 Christian Council of Nyasaland organized.
  - 1942 Committees on Christian unity of the Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches in Australia adopted proposals on church union to be submitted to the three denominational bodies.
  - 1942 Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches in the United States initiated negotiations to achieve organic union.
  - 1943 Christian Council of Kenya organized.
  - 1943 United Theological Seminary at Kerala, South India, opened.
  - 1944 Canadian Council of Churches organized.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1944 Christian Council of Mozambique organized.
- 1944 Christian Council of Northern Rhodesia organized.
- 1944 Reformed Church in America and the United Presbyterian Church of North America initiated negotiations to achieve organic union.
- 1944 Swiss Council of Missions formed by merger of the Swiss Missions Committee (1926) and the Association of Swiss Missions for International Relations (1923).
- 1944 United Student Christian Council organized in the United States.
- 1945 Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon, General Council, voted permission to four dioceses in South India to enter into union with the Methodist and South India United Churches, as provided in the Proposed Scheme of Church Union.
- \*1945 Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia formed by union of the Congregational churches connected with the London Missionary Society, the Union Church of the Copper Belt, and the Church of Central Africa (Presbyterian).
- 1945 Council of Protestant Churches in Poland organized.
- 1945 Evangelical Church in Germany, council meeting at Stuttgart, attended by representatives of the World Council of Churches.
- 1945 United Andean Indian Mission organized, in which the Evangelical and Reformed Church, Presbyterian Church, U. S., Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ co-operated.
- \*1945 United Church of Northern India enlarged by accession of the Congregational churches in Bengal connected with the London Missionary Society.
- 1946 Australian section of the World Council of Churches organized.
- 1946 Church of England in Canada and the United Church of Canada reported for study in the churches a plan for a mutually acceptable ministry.
- 1946 Church union negotiating committee in Ceylon—representing the Baptist Church; the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon; the Methodist Church; the Presbyterian Church; and the Jaffna Council of the South India United Church—issued a basis of union for the consideration of the churches.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

- 1946 Church union negotiations in South India involving the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon; the Methodist Church; and the South India United Church were advanced when the South India United Church accepted the Proposed Scheme of Church Union.
- 1946 Church World Service formed in the United States by merger of the Church Committee on Overseas Relief and Reconstruction, the Commission for World Council Service, and the Church Committee for Relief in Asia.
- 1946 Commission of the Churches on International Affairs organized under the auspices of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council.
- 1946 Ecumenical Council of the Churches in Holland organized.
- 1946 Evangelical Theological Seminary opened at Matanzas, Cuba.
- \*1946 Evangelical United Brethern Church formed in the United States by union of the Evangelical Church (1922) and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ.
- 1946 Federal Council of the Evangelical Churches in Italy organized.
- 1946 International Missionary Council, Ad Interim Committee, meeting, Geneva.
- 1946 Korea National Christian Council re-established.
- 1946 Latin American Evangelical Youth Conference. Second. Havana.
- 1946 Peruvian Evangelical Church. First general assembly.
- 1946 Reformed Church in America began co-operation with the United Presbyterian Church in Christian work in the South Sudan.
- 1946 United Bible Societies organized at the Haywards Heath conference of Bible societies.
- \*1946 United Methodist Church in Italy formed by union of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Italy and the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Italy.
- 1946 United Youth Conference of the Western Hemisphere, sponsored by the Latin American Union of Evangelical Youth, the United Christian Youth Movement in the United States, and the World's Sunday School Association. Havana.
- 1946 West Central Africa Christian Conference. Léopoldville, Belgian Congo.

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[\* indicates union of churches]

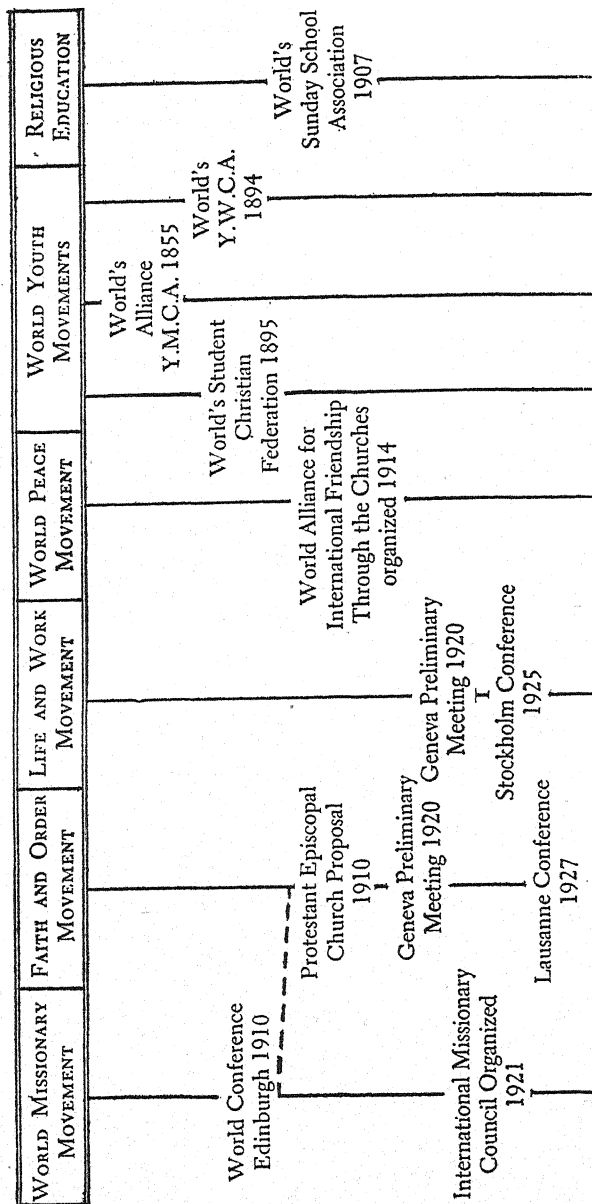
- 1946 World Council of Churches. Provisional Committee meeting. Geneva.
- 1946 World's Student Christian Federation. General Committee meeting. Geneva.
- 1946 World's Young Women's Christian Association. Enlarged meeting of the executive committee. Geneva.

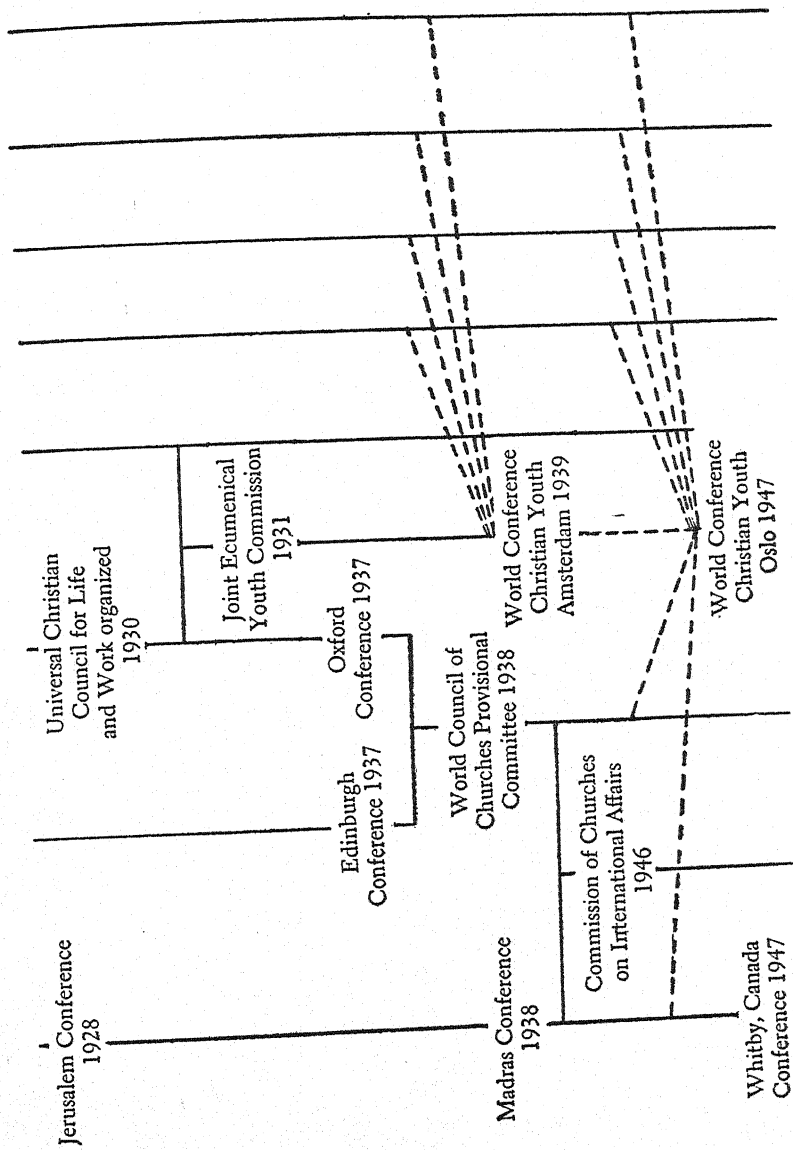


## Appendix 2

### THE ECUMENICAL TREE

[Broken lines indicate sponsoring organizations]





### Appendix 3

## THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

List of Member Churches, May 1, 1947

#### AUSTRALIA

Church of England in Australia and Tasmania  
Congregational Union of Australia  
Federal Conference of Churches of Christ in Australia [Disciples]  
Methodist Church of Australasia  
Presbyterian Church of Australia

#### AUSTRIA

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg and Helvetic Confession

#### BELGIUM

Christian Missionary Church of Belgium  
Union of Protestant Evangelical Churches of Belgium

#### BRAZIL

Methodist Church of Brazil  
Presbyterian Church of Brazil

#### CANADA

Church of England in Canada  
Presbyterian Church in Canada  
Society of Friends, Yearly Meeting  
United Church of Canada

#### CHINA

China Baptist Council  
Church of Christ in China

#### CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren  
Lutheran Church in Slovakia  
Reformed Church in Slovakia

#### DENMARK

Church of Denmark

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### EGYPT

Coptic Church  
Patriarchate of Alexandria [Eastern Orthodox]

### ENGLAND

Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland  
Church of England  
Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland [Disciples]  
Congregational Union of England and Wales  
Methodist Church  
Presbyterian Church of England

### ESTHONIA

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Esthonia

### FINLAND

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

### FRANCE

Evangelical Lutheran Church of France  
Reformed Church of France  
Reformed Church of Alsace and Lorraine

### GERMANY

Evangelical Church in Germany  
Mennonite Church  
Old Catholic Church in Germany

### GREECE

Church of Greece [Eastern Orthodox]

### HOLLAND

Evangelical Lutheran Church  
General Society of Mennonites  
Netherlands Reformed Church  
Old Catholic Church of Holland  
Remonstrant Brotherhood  
Restored Evangelical Lutheran Church

### HUNGARY

Lutheran Church of Hungary  
Reformed Church of Hungary

### INDIA

Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon (Anglican)  
Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India  
Mar Thoma Syrian Church in Malabar  
South India United Church

### INDONESIA

Protestant Church of Indonesia

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### IRELAND

- Church of Ireland [Anglican]
- Methodist Church in Ireland
- Presbyterian Church in Ireland

### ITALY

- Waldensian Church

### KOREA

- Presbyterian Church of Korea

### LITHUANIA

- Reformed Church of Lithuania

### MEXICO

- Methodist Church of Mexico

### NEW ZEALAND

- Baptist Union of New Zealand
- Church of the Province of New Zealand [Anglican]
- Congregational Union of New Zealand
- Methodist Church of New Zealand
- Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

### NORWAY

- Church of Norway

### PALESTINE

- Patriarchate of Jerusalem [Eastern Orthodox]

### PHILIPPINES

- United Evangelical Church of the Philippines

### POLAND

- Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession
- Polish National Catholic Church

### SCOTLAND

- Church of Scotland
- Congregational Union in Scotland
- Episcopal Church in Scotland

### SOUTH AFRICA

- Congregational Union of South Africa
- Methodist Church of South Africa

### SWEDEN

- Church of Sweden
- Swedish Covenant Mission

### SWITZERLAND

- Old Catholic Church of Switzerland
- Swiss Protestant Church Federation

## APPENDIX

### SYRIA

Patriarchate of Antioch [Eastern Orthodox]

### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

African Methodist Episcopal Church  
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church  
Church of the Brethren  
Church of the East and of the Assyrians  
Congregational Christian Churches  
Evangelical and Reformed Church  
Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America  
Evangelical United Brethren Church  
International Convention of Disciples of Christ  
Methodist Church  
Moravian Church (Northern Province)  
National Baptist Convention, U. S. A.  
Northern Baptist Convention  
Polish National Catholic Church of America  
Presbyterian Church in the United States  
Presbyterian Church in the United States of America  
Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America  
Reformed Church in America  
Religious Society of Friends  
    Five Years Meeting  
    General Conference  
    Philadelphia Yearly Meeting  
Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America  
Seventh Day Baptist General Conference  
Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Church, Archdiocese of New York  
    and All North America  
United Evangelical Lutheran Church  
United Lutheran Church in America  
United Presbyterian Church of North America

### WALES

Presbyterian Church in Wales

### WEST INDIES

Church of the Province of the West Indies [Anglican]

### YUGOSLAVIA

Old Catholic Church of Yugoslavia

Salvation Army

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### IRELAND

Church of Ireland [Anglican]  
Methodist Church in Ireland  
Presbyterian Church in Ireland

### ITALY

Waldensian Church

### KOREA

Presbyterian Church of Korea

### LITHUANIA

Reformed Church of Lithuania

### MEXICO

Methodist Church of Mexico

### NEW ZEALAND

Baptist Union of New Zealand  
Church of the Province of New Zealand [Anglican]  
Congregational Union of New Zealand  
Methodist Church of New Zealand  
Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

### NORWAY

Church of Norway

### PALESTINE

Patriarchate of Jerusalem [Eastern Orthodox]

### PHILIPPINES

United Evangelical Church of the Philippines

### POLAND

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession  
Polish National Catholic Church

### SCOTLAND

Church of Scotland  
Congregational Union in Scotland  
Episcopal Church in Scotland

### SOUTH AFRICA

Congregational Union of South Africa  
Methodist Church of South Africa

### SWEDEN

Church of Sweden  
Swedish Covenant Mission

### SWITZERLAND

Old Catholic Church of Switzerland  
Swiss Protestant Church Federation

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### SYRIA

Patriarchate of Antioch [Eastern Orthodox]

### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

African Methodist Episcopal Church

African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

Church of the Brethren

Church of the East and of the Assyrians

Congregational Christian Churches

Evangelical and Reformed Church

Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America

Evangelical United Brethren Church

International Convention of Disciples of Christ

Methodist Church

Moravian Church (Northern Province)

National Baptist Convention, U. S. A.

Northern Baptist Convention

Polish National Catholic Church of America

Presbyterian Church in the United States

Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America

Reformed Church in America

Religious Society of Friends

Five Years Meeting

General Conference

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America

Seventh Day Baptist General Conference

Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Church, Archdiocese of New York  
and All North America

United Evangelical Lutheran Church

United Lutheran Church in America

United Presbyterian Church of North America

### WALES

Presbyterian Church in Wales

### WEST INDIES

Church of the Province of the West Indies [Anglican]

### YUGOSLAVIA

Old Catholic Church of Yugoslavia

Salvation Army



## Appendix 4

### CHURCH UNION IN SOUTH INDIA

#### i

We have noted the unique—in many respects the crucial—importance of the present proposals for church union in South India. It is hardly too much to say that, in this particular phase of the movement of consolidation—reunion—the whole Christian world has waited breathless upon the final decision in South India. The cause of Christian unity will be set forward or retarded immeasurably by the outcome. This is partly due to the fact that the projected Church of South India would embrace representative bodies from each of the three major Protestant families—Anglican and Methodist, Presbyterian and Reformed, and Congregationalist. It is partly because the action proposed is a full and final organic union into one single Church of South India. It is partly because the South India Scheme faces squarely all the major difficulties confronting Christian reunion. It builds firmly upon the considered judgment of the Protestant and Orthodox worlds formulated in the sequence of ecumenical conferences. If successful, it will solve in principle and provide precedent for all later solutions of the crucial obstacles toward the ultimate union of non-Roman Christendom.

The nature and significance of the proposals has been thus summarized by one who has had an important part in their development:

This Union, if consummated, means that the Indian Christians, originally connected with the following denominations, are to be united within one Church . . . : The English Congregationalists, Reformed Church of America, Scotch Presbyterians, Australian

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Presbyterians, American Congregationalists, Basel Mission of Germany, the Methodists (British Wesleyans) and the Church of England. It means full organic union between Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Episcopalians, based on the Historic Episcopate in a constitutional form, something which has never been achieved before.

According to the figures of 1941, the Church of South India will embrace 263,680 communicant members, and a total Christian community of 1,017,183.

### ii

I dare not take space to describe the South India Scheme in detail. The plan in its entirety deserves the careful study of all Christians sincerely concerned for the unity of Christ's Church, not alone because of its specific proposals, but also because of the temper which animates it throughout. Something of both principle and spirit is suggested in these sentences from the Foreword:

It is sought to combine in the union three elements—the Episcopal, the Presbyterian and the Congregational; and it is believed that each of these elements has been embodied. Comprehension and not limitation has been the aim. All that has been found helpful in the uniting Churches has been included, and each Church will find its special contribution enriched by what the others contribute.

Again, the united Church must be a true part of the Church Universal, and will seek to be in fellowship with all the Churches in which Jesus is worshipped as Lord. It will therefore retain communion with the Churches to which the uniting Churches owe their origin, and at the same time will hope to work toward a still wider fellowship.

The Scheme has been prepared in an atmosphere of prayer and of earnest seeking of the knowledge of the Divine Will. From the beginning it has been recognized that union is a spiritual fact which finds its manifestation in an organic life. . . . Jesus Christ is the Person in whom the Churches unite. His life and death and ever-living presence must be central in the thought, life and devotion of each member of the Church, as in that of the Church as a whole. His Cross is the place of meeting. The united Church will therefore desire to bring together all the different types of spiritual ex-

## APPENDIX

perience represented in the uniting Churches, and to keep together in the one Brotherhood those who emphasize the individual experience of the Christian heart, those who place the Cross in the center of their worship, investing with every solemnity of ritual the sacramental presentation of the great act of man's redemption, and those who bid the Church take full account of all new knowledge of the world which God's Spirit imparts to the human mind by channels other than those of organized religion.

After union the Church will be a spiritual home for all those who have hitherto lived and worshipped in separation. There are differences of belief, of practice, of tradition, but all the members will bring into the united Church whatever of value they have learned in their separate organizations. Each of these elements will find its proper and effective place and be an enrichment of the life of the united Church. That Church will be a fellowship, and in that fellowship every member will find such a spiritual atmosphere that he can worship God with added devotion and serve men with enlarged powers and opportunities. And only by this union will there be released those mighty spiritual forces which will deepen the spiritual life of the members of the united Church and increase their power for the evangelization of India.<sup>1</sup>

The same basic principle, the same purpose, and the same hope are reiterated in similar phrases in the "Basis of Union," and again in the "Constitution of the Church of South India":

The Church of South India believes that the unity of His Church for which Christ prayed is a unity in Him and in the Father through the Holy Spirit, and is therefore fundamentally a reality of the spiritual realm. It seeks the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But this unity of the Spirit must find expression in the faith and order of the Church, in its worship, in its organization and in its whole life, so that as the Body of Christ, it may be a fit instrument for carrying out His gracious purposes in the world.

Again, for the perfecting of the life of the whole body, the Church of South India needs the heritage of each of the uniting Churches, and each of those Churches will, it is hoped, not lose the continuity of its own life, but preserve that life enriched by the union with itself of the other two Churches. The Church of South

<sup>1</sup> Proposed Scheme of Church Union in South India (7th ed. rev.), The Christian Literature Society for India, 1942. Obtainable through the International Missionary Council, 156 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.

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India is thus formed by a combination of different elements each bringing its contribution to the whole, and not by the absorption of any one by any other. It is, therefore, a comprehensive Church; and its members, firmly holding the fundamentals of the faith and order of the Church Universal, are allowed wide freedom of opinion in all other matters, and wide freedom of action in such differences of practice as are consistent with the general framework of the Church as one organized body.

The Church of South India acknowledges that in every effort to bring together divided members of Christ's Body into one organization, the final aim must be the union in the Universal Church of all who acknowledge the name of Christ, and that the test of all local schemes of union is that they should express locally the principle of the great catholic unity of the Body of Christ. The Church of South India desires, therefore, conserving all that is of spiritual value in its Indian heritage, to express under Indian conditions and in Indian forms the spirit, the thought and the life of the Church Universal.

### iii

Setting forth with these clear purposes and holding firmly to its guiding principle, the Church of South India approaches that issue which we have discovered to be the crucial stumbling block to Christian reunion—the question of the character and authority of the ministry:

It is the will of Christ that there should be a ministry accepted and fully effective throughout the world-wide Church. In the present divided state of Christendom there is no ministry which in this respect fully corresponds with the purpose of God, and the ministry can recover fulness only by the union of all parts of the one Body. The uniting Churches . . . acknowledge each other's ministries to be real ministries of the Word and Sacraments, and thankfully recognize the spiritual efficacy of sacraments and other ministrations which God has so clearly blessed. . . . Each Church, in separation, has borne special witness to certain elements of the truth; therefore for the perfecting of the whole body the heritage of each is needed. Each, maintaining the continuity of its own life, will be enriched by the gifts and graces of the others.

But how are the different types of ministry to be reconciled within a single united Church? The answer is found in the recommendation of the Lausanne and Edinburgh conferences:

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The Church of South India recognizes that episcopal, presbyteral, and congregational elements must all have their place in its order of life, and that the episcopate, the presbyterate, and the congregation of the faithful should all in their several spheres have responsibility and exercise authority in the life and work of the Church, in its governance and administration, in its evangelistic and pastoral work, in its discipline, and its worship.

How are these principles to be given effect in actual organizational structure?

The basic unit in the structure of the Church of South India is the *congregation*, consisting of all members of a local group of the faithful.

Those are members according to the will and purposes of God who have been baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and receiving the calling and grace of God with faith, continue steadfast therein, maintaining by the same faith, through the various means of grace which He has provided by His Church, their vital union with the Head of the Body, and through Him their friendship one with another.

The next highest division is the *diocese*, embracing all congregations within a certain geographical area. Each diocese is under the leadership of a bishop. But the administration of the diocese is entrusted to a diocesan council consisting of the bishop, the assistant bishop (if any), all presbyters in charge of pastorates, and lay representatives at least equal in number to the pastorates in the diocese and not greater than twice that number.

The supreme governing and legislative body of the Church of South India, and the final authority in all matters pertaining to the Church, is to be the *synod*, composed of all bishops and not fewer than two presbyters and four laymen from each diocese, with additional representatives according to numbers of baptized members.

The officers of the synod are to be a moderator, a deputy moderator, a general secretary, and a treasurer, elected by the synod at its biennial meeting. The moderator and deputy moderator are to be chosen from among the bishops.

Presbyters (ministers) are to be ordained by the laying on of hands by the bishop of the diocese and by presbyters according

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to rules established by the diocesan council, but always on recommendation of or after consultation with the congregation to which the candidate belongs, and also after acceptance of the candidate both by the bishop and by the diocesan council or a diocesan body appointed for the purpose.

Nominations for the election of a diocesan bishop shall be made by both the diocesan council and the executive committee of the synod. From these nominations, the diocesan council shall elect not fewer than two nor more than four persons. A board consisting of the moderator of the synod and six members appointed by the executive committee of the synod shall then choose the bishop, subject to confirmation by the executive committee of the synod. He shall be consecrated by the laying on of hands of at least three bishops and three presbyters.

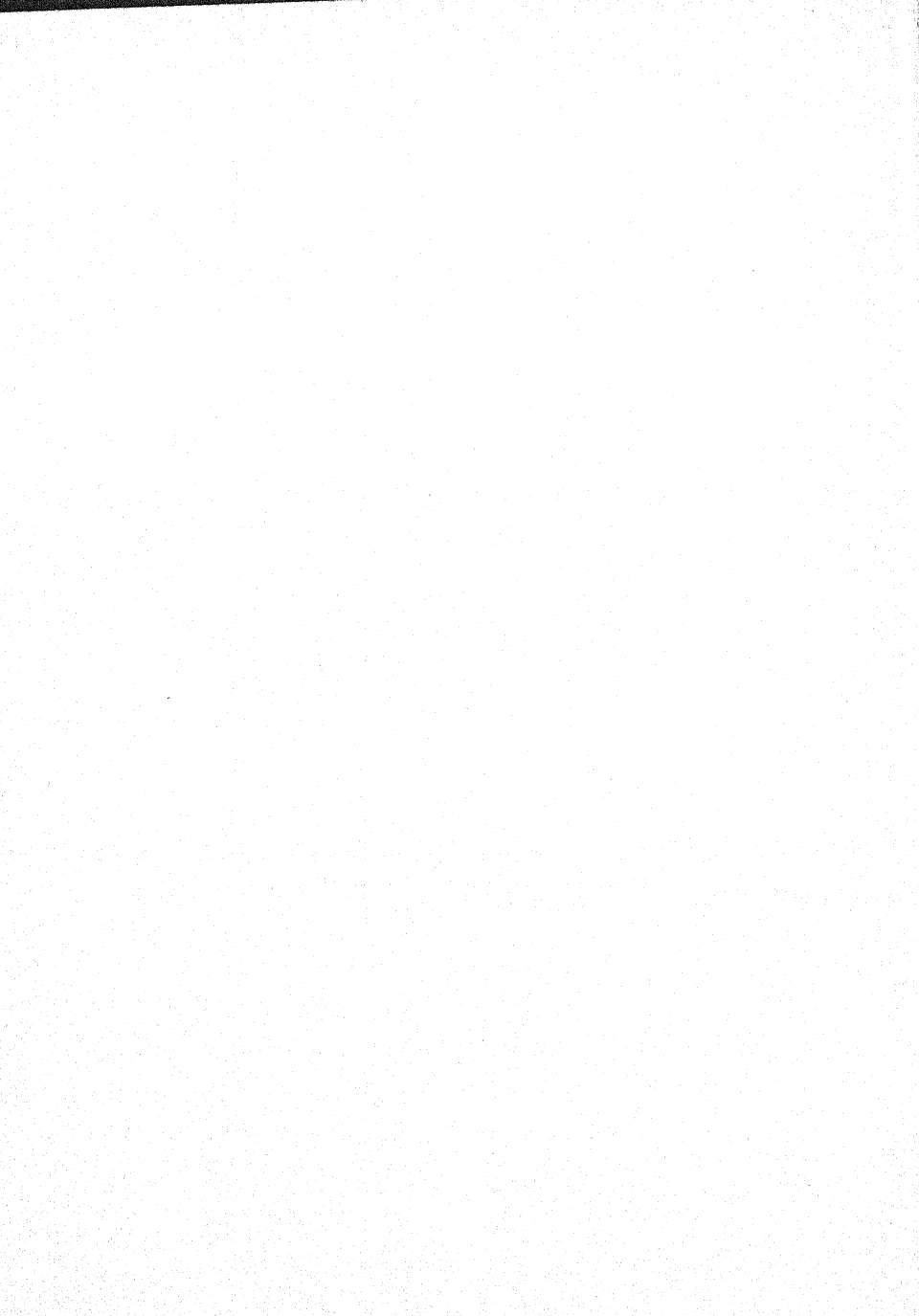
This skeleton outline of the organization shows how successfully the projected Church of South India has assured that "episcopal, presbyteral, and congregational elements" shall have their place in the "life and work of the Church."

### iv

Finally, what is the likelihood that the proposed Church of South India will actually come into being?

Its consummation requires the affirmative decision of the three uniting bodies, each acting according to its own method of procedure. Up to the summer of 1946, two of the three bodies—the Methodist Church and the participating dioceses of the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon (Anglican)—had acted favorably. In September 1946 the assembly of the South India United Church (itself an earlier union of English Congregationalists, Australian Presbyterians, American Congregationalists, the Reformed Church of America, and the Basel Mission) voted, 103 to 10, with 7 abstentions, to participate in the union.

It is the judgment of one of the leading authorities on the matter that "there are ninety-nine chances out of a hundred that the union will be consummated."



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Dear Mr. [illegible]

I have just received your letter of the 10th inst.

and am glad to hear from you.

I am well and hope this finds you the same.

I have not much news to write at present.

I am, however, very anxious to hear from you.

I am, dear Mr. [illegible], very truly yours,

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]